MISTRESS PENWICK

DUTTON PAYNE

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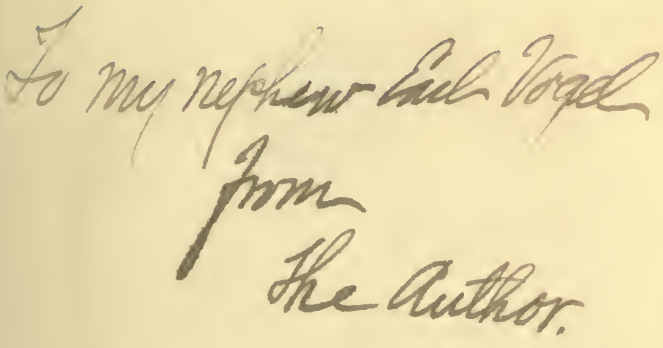
MISTRESS PENWICK



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MISTRESS PENWICK

BY

DUTTON PAYNE

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Mistress Penwick

CHAPTER I

THE URSULINE LOSES A PUPIL

"If the ship sails at dawn, then I must hasten to tell my mistress of the departure, and—of her father's letter."

"I am loath to let yonder tide take her away so soon, Janet."

"But my master's words are a positive command to leave Quebec at once," and Janet's eyes fell to the imperative line at the close of her letter which read: "In God's name, good nurse, take my baby to England in all haste."

"Aye, our noble patron's desire must be carried out!" and the Mother Superior without further lament went from the small cell.

When the last echo of her footsteps had died away, Janet Wadham cautiously opened the inner door and passed to the cell adjoining, and to the low couch upon which lay her mistress in sound slumber.

Fondly she noted the beauty of her charge;

the heavy waving hair gleaming in the fading light a bronze-like amber, the white forehead, the arched brow, the glow of health upon lip and cheek, the slender neck, the slope of shoulders, and the outline of a perfect form.

Then the maid stirred and opened her eyes. Her whole body thrilled with the awakening.

"Ah, 'twas like the bursting of a bud! How dost feel now, Mistress?"

"I am not ill at all. I am a martyr to thy imagination. Dost remember the time, Janet, I drowsed in the chapel and thou didst make me drink bitterwort for a fortnight?" and the girl's voice rung out in soft laughter.

"Aye, I have not forgotten, nor why thou wert drowsy either, Mistress Penwick."

"Nay, thou didst not know."

"I did so. Thou hadst a book of tales and read nights with the candle shaded by thy mother's landskip fan, and I gave thee aloes for thy folly."

"Thou dost always find me out, Janet; I shall be glad when I become a woman as big as thou."

"Thou art a woman to-day, and thou wilt never be as big as I; so, having age and not a hulking servant's body, be content. I have a letter from my master, and in it is much that concerns thee ——"

"Isn't there always much that concerns me?"

"But not such important concernings. He

has gone on a long journey and proposes one for thee, my lambkin." Katherine raised herself in bed. "Nay, thou must not stir or I hush my tale! Thy father has provided thee with a guardian and 'tis to him I take thee. We go to England by the first boat,—nay, lay back, calm thyself or I take my wagging tongue away; if thou dost so much as stir again, I leave thee. Thou art to go to a great house over there and see grand folks with fine airs and modish dress. Wilt be glad to see outside of convent walls? 'Tis nine years since I brought thee here a babe of six, and have nursed thee well to this hour, and thy strength and health and beauty show the care given thee." She suddenly arose and went to the window to hide if possible her agitation; but when she looked forth on the snow-covered city and on beyond at the long range of forest that lay low and black against the arctic sky, she turned from the gloomy scene and went again to the couch, quickly suppressing all thoughts save those that were purely selfish: she would be glad to bid adieu to this great, still northern world and leave behind forever old Quebec, even though she must divide her treasure.

"I have been a mother to thee, child, and now I must divide my rule with a cantankerous Scot ——"

"Nay, a Scot and lives in England?"

"He lives in England and thy father speaks of bending somewhat thy quick temper to the mould of self-control as a safer parry to Scotch thrust; so I conclude the gentleman must be a Scot."

"Janet, 'tis these awful men that wear skirts like women. I remember many years ago when I was in Sister Agnes' room, of seeing some of those dreadful pictures of skirts and bandy-legs. They are unseemly things for men to wear; it is as though one were uncivilised. I hate him already for it!"

"Lambkin, thou must remember thy teachings. Sister Agnes would admonish thee for saying hate. Besides thou dost not know the man, he may be a second father to thee and cajole and pamper thy whims. He may even eschew plaid frocks and don modish garments—that would hide bandy-legs still less! Thy father said I must enjoin upon thee respect, for his lordship's age; regard, for his wishes, and thou art to obey his commands, as 'twas not possible for him to direct thee otherwise than good. If at any time he should find thee in fault, be the matter seemingly beneath notice, acknowledge thy wrongness, for he hath a temper and might goad thee to greater blunder. His blood flows hot and fast, and thou must cool and swage it with thy gentle dignity. Inasmuch as thy moneys and estates are in my Lord Cedric's con-

trol, thou art to receive such income from him without question. Thy father further directs perfect submission to Lord Cedric in matters of marriage, as he will bring suitors of high degree for thy choice and thou wilt find among them a lover to thy liking." The rosy red flew into the maiden's face and she trembled with a sweet new emotion she did not understand.

"This is the first time thou hast ever spoken to me of lovers, Janet. Indeed very strange things seem to be happening to-day. I feel like a bird about to fly forth from its cradle-nest, I have forgotten how the world appears. 'Tis broad and vast; it makes me dizzy to think between these cramped walls that never seemed so narrow heretofore!" She lay for a moment in deep thought, then,—"Where didst say father journeyed?"

"He said not, but intimated 'twas a place of safety where he was happy to go from political intrigue and war, and where he shall meet friends."

"Why did he not inscribe some words to me?"

"He speaks of an epistle of welcome—and farewell to be given thee by Lord Cedric upon thy arrival in England. 'Twill give thee greater pleasure then."

"But Janet; a Scot! A blustering, red-faced Scot with petticoats! Hast ever seen one outside of pictures?"

"Aye, Lambkin, and 'twas the unseemly kilt that was the better part; for I have met a blustering red-faced Scot as thou sayest; and he was boisterous and surly, giving vent to a choleric temper by coarse oaths; and 'twas his plaid denoted a gentleman of high rank withal. The long hair that swept his shoulders was as florid as his face, as was also his flowing whiskers and mustachio, the latter being bitten short and forming a bristling fringe over a slavering mouth,—what is it, Mistress, thou art pale, has pain taken thee?"

"Nay, 'tis nausea, an awful loathing; I wish to remain here. Send at once my desires to my father. I will not go to England, Janet!"

"'Tis better thou shouldst think of something else beside my Lord Cedric, for instance, his great demesne, Crandlemar Castle, the most beautiful of his several seats; the splendid horses and equipages; and, thyself, Lambkin, think of thyself bedecked in gorgeous hued brocades; be-furbelowed in rare lace and costly furs. And thou wilt have a maid to build thy hair, tie shoulder knots and make smart ribbons and frills, and furbish bijoux and gems. And thou wilt wear perfume, and carry a nosegay and fan. And thou wilt sweep the most graceful courtesy and queen it everywhere with thy sweet graciousness. Thy father says thou shouldst become an idol to the old man's heart, as my lord is without wife or daughter."

"If his demesne be in England, 'tis but right he should become as far as possible a genuine Anglo-Saxon, and if I can turn him, I will. How soon does the boat sail?"

"Within forty-eight hours we shall be upon the sea and thou wilt have begun to whimper and bemoan its awful swell. 'Twill have more evacuating power than teeth-curtailed mustachios upon thy heretofore staunch stomach."

"Nay, I will not believe my Lord Cedric such a man; and yet thou hast drawn a picture that will be ever before me until I see him. Sister Agnes would say,—'there is a sinfulness in doubt and anxiety, inasmuch as such thoughts lash the soul to uneasiness and draw it from celestial contemplations. Think not on it!' neither will I, but rather, I will fancy the morrow's sun glinting upon myriad white-capped waves; the bosom of the ocean swelling with emotion and—didst say 'twould make me ill, Janet?"

"I am afraid of it, 'twill be glorious if thou art not; for 'tis a wonderful thing to see the rise and fall of sun and moon, and witness storms that seldom fail to lend their fearfulness to the voyagers of so long a journey."

"Wilt thou be afraid, Janet?"

"Nay, not I; 'twill be the elixir of ambrosia to breathe salt air again, and the stronger and more mist-laden the better to knock out foul ex-

halations sucked in these nine years from musty walls. 'Twill be sweet to have the wind rap from us the various fungi that comes from sunless chambers. Ah, a stiff breeze will rejuvenate thy fifteen years one month to a lusty, crowing infant and my forty all-seasons to a simpering wench."

"How splendid, Janet!" Katherine threw out her arms and drew a long, deep breath. "'Twill be glorious to breathe pure, free air!"

"Aye, my Lambkin, and thy chest will broaden and be larger by two good inches ere we see chalk cliffs and English waters. Thou wilt open like a rose to the sunshine of the outer world. But, we are anticipating—let us speak of the present. To-night we go to vespers for the last time, and thou must bid thy friends adieu before I tuck thee in thy cot as we arise and are off before day-dawn. Let thy farewells be briefly spoken as if thou wert to be gone but a day. 'Twas thy father's wish thou shouldst not grieve at parting with thy companions, or the Sisters or Mother. 'Tis best to leave them the remembrance of a face happy, rather than one steeped in sorrow. Say to them what thy heart dictates, but with a quick tongue and bright countenance; 'twill tend to suppress tears and numb the pain at thy heart. When thou art thus engaged I will prepare us for journeying. Wilt thou wear thy Sunday gown?"

"Tis none too good! couldst put on a ribbon to relieve its greyness?"

"Ah, Lambkin, thou hast begun already with thy fine lady's notions! thou wilt be crying for high-heeled boots and built-up hair and stays, stays, Mistress, stays wilt be thy first cry—oh, Lambkin, thou art heavy-hearted and I am turning myself into a fool to physic thy risibles;—I wish we were upon the sea at this moment; if it were possible I should have taken thee while thou wert in sleep; but nay, I could not; for thou art a maiden grown and art plump and heavy with all. If I had taken thee so, thou wouldst have wept anyway, perhaps; for 'tis thy nature to have thy own way. 'Twould be a cross to thy father could he see thee now. I doubt not 'twould turn the Scot's bull-scaring face to ashen hues, 'tis possible—" Katherine's soft rippling laugh interrupted her, and at its sound Janet leant and kissed the maid's pink-palmed hands as they lay upon the coverlet, and taking them within her own fondled them, saying,—"And thou wilt surprise my lord and his friends by thy rare playing of the clavichord, and 'tis possible so great and wealthy a man will own a pianoforte of which we have heard so much; and mayhap thou will be presented at Court, and in great London town thou mayest see many musicians from France, for 'tis not improbable they are brought over the channel at the instance of

his Majesty. Is it not grand to think of all these things, Lambkin?"

"Aye, 'tis glorious! But Janet, let me up and dress me—ah, it seems an age until the morrow!"

"'Twas with greater care than usual Janet made ready her Mistress. And after sundry admonitions about cold corridors and draughts, opened the door and watched her in silence as she passed through, and down the hall to vespers. And when evening prayer was over and Katherine had gone to say adieu, Janet began to pack the chests for their early flight; her heart exultant, save for the sorrow of not seeing her master again as she believed and having some little fear of the new one she was about to encounter.

CHAPTER II

THE LORD OF CRANDLEMAR

THE adieux had been said, the night had come and gone, and with the dawn the tide drew away carrying with it a large vessel upon the deck of which stood Janet and Katherine wrapped in long traveling capes.

"'Tis the most wondrous sight I ever beheld! Thinkest thou the Bethlehem Star could have been more beautiful than yonder Lucifer. Indeed it seems, Janet, we see in all nature the reflection of the Christ; the birth of dawn; the presence of the star; these black waters. 'Tis awesome! Listen, Janet, thou must acknowledge thou hearest something more than plaint of ocean. 'Tis something more than sound. It fills me with an exultation I cannot analyze. Dost feel it, Janet?"

"I cannot tell what I feel, Mistress." And Janet covered her mouth to smother her laughter; first of all because she felt seasick, and secondly the child's words stirred in her no such youthful enthusiasm. She was not yet rejuvenated.

"And with all this glory of nature filling me I can less understand Sister Phelia's words at parting. Her eyes seemed to burn to my very soul as she said: 'Dost not feel as thou art leaving these sacred walls that thou art passing from a retreat where the Blessed Virgin ever guides thee?' 'I have felt her presence ever, said I. 'But 'tis better to renounce the world and have strength to live in seclusion,' she answered. I made bold and replied that I thought it required much greater strength to go on the battlefield of the world and be good than live within the impenetrable walls of a cloister where sin cannot come. 'But, child, thou wilt see beautiful things made by the hand of man that will fill thy heart leaving not room for the Divine Presence.' 'Nay,' said I, 'I shall see God's work in every beauteous thing and I shall trust Him for the gift of penetration to see through filthy rags and distorted body the beauty of the soul.' 'Twas her wish that I should write her once a year of my spiritual condition and to think of her as being happy in her isolation. And with this strange light about us, the farewell recurs to me and I wonder that human beings could shut themselves from so beauteous a thing as Nature in their fear of contamination by sin!"

"My Lambkin, 'they talk strongest who never felt temptation;' thou art going into a world

thou hast not seen, much less, felt its power. Sister Phelia is right. We acknowledge the Divine Presence is everywhere; she intimated thou wert leaving a place where sin was not, to go where it abounded. There is one place, however, we may always be sure of finding the divine atom whether we be in seclusion or abroad; 'tis in our own heart and called before the ages, 'Holy Ghost.' Many of us fail to recognize it; others cry 'insolvency'; but the better part draw on it with confidence. It honours our call and gives us on demand, conscience, with which we can withstand all sin if we so desire."

The second day upon the water Janet fell a victim to *mal-de-mer*, and 'twas Katherine who turned nurse; and after four or five days Janet grew better and was half ashamed, veiling her confusion with self-accusation: "'Tis good enough for me, 'twas wrong to be eating pork, 'tis positively forbidden us. I lay it to that! I gave myself over to eating to make up for a fast of nine long years. Thou hadst not a qualm because thou hast been fed on wine and porridge and beef gruel and whey. The clearness of thy body speaks for a pure stomach. Let the awfulness of my condition warn thee. Thou must never grumble when I take from thee weightier food than thou hast been used to. But, Lambkin, we have had a glorious voyage inasmuch as we have had both calm and storm; had I been priv-

ileged to do the ordering, we could not have had better weather."

Janet and her mistress walked the deck when 'twas possible, from rise to set of sun, and Katherine expanded until her convent dress became straightened, and she retired to her bed while Janet let out seams, augmenting it to her mistress' further comfort and development.

It was almost with regret that they espied land; for Janet was anxious, and Katherine was apprehensive of the Scot, and as the white cliffs appeared to rise higher they each wished the sea journey had just begun.

At last they stood upon English soil, and so bewildered was Katherine she could only cling to Janet's dress like a frightened child; there was such a clamour, 'twas like pandemonium. The poor frightened thing was inclined to believe that the people were mad and raving, and was hardly called to concentration of thought when Lord Cedric's Chaplain stood before them dumbfounded by her beauty.

He was a pale, little man, who managed with difficulty to collect his senses and lead them to an equipage of imposing richness that stood not far away. And immediately after chests and sundry articles of travel were placed upon the coach, the rolling wheels carried them through the town and on beyond, over plains and hills and lonely moors, through forests of oak and

beech, coloured in the grey of winter. Nor did the ponderous vehicle stop save for a hurried refreshment or a short night's rest at some wayside inn.

Lord Cedric's orders were not being strictly carried out. The Chaplain was to bring back to the castle Janet Wadham and baby. Here was the first-named, but where was the child? The little man was fearful he had made some mistake, and grew exceedingly nervous when they at last spied the battlements of Crandlemar Castle, and the child for whom he had gone must be accounted for.

Night was falling as the equipage bearing Mistress Katherine and her attendants passed between the massive stone pillars of the gate into the long avenues bordered by leafless trees; and when yet some distance from the castle, the occupants could catch glimpses of many lighted windows. Katherine lay back on the cushions tired, timid, half-fearful, wondering. Not so Janet; she craned body and neck fearful lest some small detail of the visible grandeur might escape her. In a moment more they had stopped at the great entrance, and immediately the ponderous doors were thrown wide by two ugly little dwarfs in magnificent livery. Out trooped other menials of perhaps less age and greater dignity, quickly gathering from the equipage the chests and bags and other articles of less cum-

brousness. Mistress Katherine, with Janet by her side, was so blinded by the glare of lights and furbished gildings, she saw naught, but followed on up winding stairs, stepping twice upon each broad step; through corridors and alcoves and winding halls, and in her ears was the sound of men's and women's soft laughter, and she breathed the perfume of flowers, and inhaled as they passed some half-open door, the odour of *paudre de rose* and jasmine.

A woman older, less comely than Janet, and having the smirk of a perfunctory greeting upon her flabby face, stood within the room assigned to Mistress Katherine. As her eyes fell upon the maid, she stepped back surprised, and with a confusion she essayed to hide in her coarse voiced acknowledgment of their presence.

"The child, madam, where's the child? 'is Ludship sent me to take charge of the hinfant and 'er nurse."

Janet's voice rang like steel as she said,—

"Thou canst fondle me to thy heart's content, but the 'hinfant his' a maiden grown and well able to look after her own swathings; 'twould better serve thee and us to get thee below and prepare thine 'hinfant'-grown some meat and wine with etceteras, and plenty of them, for she hath a lusty and ever-present appetite. But stay, where wilt thou cradle thy babe's nurse, in this room beyond the closet?" With a superhuman

effort, as it were,—the woman, confident of the importance of her position, and the forbearance such an one should have in dealing with the less consequential,—suppressed her choler and raised her eyebrows, and spoke with the coldness of her betters.

"Thou wilt sleep there for a time, at least until 'is Ludship's guests 'ave gone; the nurseries 'ave been turned into guests' rooms,—'is Ludship 'as Royalty beneath 'is roof and bade me take the —the child to the furth'rest room and keep hits squawking 'ushed!" With a deprecating gesture, she shuffled from the room.

'Twas a great square apartment, with low ceiling, a small hearthstone and an immense bedstead with tester and outer coverings of flowered chintz. The light from the two small candles upon the high mantel-shelf were dimmed by the greater light from the hearth.

With a long, heavy sigh, which ended in a quiet half-hearted laugh, Katherine flung herself back in a huge chair and said,—

"Art not afraid to lash tongues with a trusted servant of my Lord Cedric? She may give thee an ill name."

"Nay, rather, if I had boxed 'er hears' 'twould have been better. Indeed, if thou hadst been absent I should have brawled it with her. 'Ludship'—'tis the cant of a pot house wench,—'is Ludship' to me, who has been consorting with

Sister Agnes and Phelia and Drusah and the Mother Superior of the Ursuline. Wilt let me dress thee now?"

"Nay, Janet, I will cleanse my face and hands, have my supper—for I'm nearly famished, and jump into yonder bed that hath a lid——"

"Why, Lambkin, that is a tester, 'tis the first thou hast seen! But, Lambkin, I would have thee don thy pretty white dress and go down to more cheerful surroundings."

"Nay, Janet, I could not raise courage. Have my supper brought up!"

"My blessed Lambkin, I will take thee down and see that they give thee proper food for thy coach-jostled stomach. Thou shalt have a room and table to thyself. I'll see to it. I thought upon it coming up to this sky-begotten chamber. The toddy would freeze stiff and the pheasants grow to clamminess on so long and frigid a journey. I will dress thee and then will find my way down and make things ready for thy comfort and privacy."

'Twas a soft, white, clinging gown, high-necked and long-sleeved, with the perfume of incense in its folds, Janet vested her mistress in. The thick rolls of hair framing her face glinted with bronze and amber sheen. Her warm youthful blood coloured her countenance with the tints of the peach blossom. Thus she stood gloriously beautiful; ready for conquest.

Janet went below, nor was she gone long ere she came again to her mistress' side.

"Didst see any signs of petticoats, Janet?"

"Nay, mistress," and her voice was sober and intense. "I tried to find a servants' stairway, but it seemed all were grand and confusing. And every moment lackeys rushed by me bearing trays of smoking viands, and not even so much as looking my way. At last I found one I thought would take the time to answer a question and I asked him the way below. He answered me civilly and conducted me saying the while, that 'twas a grand party his Lord Cedric was having; members of the Royal family being present; he even mentioned the Dukes of Buckingham and Monmouth. The boy was so filled with good sense I am sure, Mistress, he spoke truly and that we are within a very great man's house. I found old flabby, and she took me to a cosy little room with a table ready spread. So come, my Lambkin, when his Lordship finds not a baby but a rare gem for his costly setting, his heart will bound with pleasure and he will regret he did not prepare for a great lady instead of an infant."

Timorously the maid followed Janet through intricate windings to the broad stairway.

"Janet, take me through the servants' passage for this once!"

"Nay, thou art a lady, and as such must keep

to the grand aisles." So on they went traversing lofty corridors. In one of these they suddenly came upon a young gallant of youthful beauty; a mould of elegance and strength; his countenance was flushed and shaded by curling black hair that fell loose upon his shoulders. In his shapely, white, bejewelled fingers he held a blood-red rose, and as his eyes fell upon the most beautiful face he had ever beheld, he caught his breath and held the rose to his face to hide his devouring glances as she swept by him under the soft light cast by the sconces above her head. In a moment he was upon the stairway, breathless and panting, and leaning over, dropped the rose at her feet. Her face grew as rosy as the thing itself, but passing on made none other sign.

"'Tis a conquest thou hast made the first hour, and thou acknowledged thy victory with naught but a modest maiden blush. But, Lambkin, his body was not a match for thine; 'twas inclined to be too slender. I shall pick for thee a beau like Sir Williams's Romeo."

They had now come to where the table awaited Katherine, and Janet bustled about handing things for her mistress' convenience; then hurried out to send in the warm food from the oven.

"Janet, didst say the bird was a pheasant?—'Tis grand tasting!"

"Aye, Mistress, and there was a score of other things that I would not let thee eat; 'twould make pimples on thy snowy neck and shoulders."

"Dost think perchance the young man upon the stairway was the Duke of Monmouth? He was very handsome, Janet, I think he was very, very handsome."

"Thou dost have the names of the great upon thy tongue as commonly as thou sayest Janet; 'tis more than probable he is a country squire and ——"

"Dear Janet, go get thy supper and get back to me, for I would rather remain here alone than in yonder chamber. 'Tis grand to live in so great a house, 'tis better than—than the convent. How soon shall I have fine frocks and jewels and —a beau like yonder one on the stairway?"

"Thou art becoming exercised prematurely; his Lordship may not condescend to visit his puling babe before his guests depart. In such case, thou wilt have time to cool thy haste. I will go now. Do not eat too much, Lambkin." Janet looked back admiringly as she left the room; her eyes upon her mistress' daintily ruddy face, smiling at her from between two tall candles.

Every appointment of room and table was essentially English, and Mistress Katherine cast her eye about wondering if 'twas so, or, were they Scotch? She inclined to the former, and a sigh of relief and happiness escaped her.

Suddenly there was a sound of hurrying footsteps with an accompanying one of broad Scotch oaths in no low key. A lackey carrying a bagpipe rushed into the room and out again without noticing its occupant. At his very heels was a big Scotchman of large and ridiculous proportions; red hair, red face, red whiskers, red mustachios, and bandy-legs, petticoats and all; and a tongue ripping out hot oaths. In a moment Katherine was upon her feet, her eyes flashed forth indignation. The keen eyes of the Scot saw her at a glance. He looked, stared, then bent almost to the floor before her and waited thus for her to speak. She, not accustomed to the masculine courtesies of polite breeding, thought his attitude was too prolonged for either a bow of homage or humiliation; and she straightway in a voice that was tremulous with emotion, said:

"Has the bitterness of thy tongue taken root in thy stomach?" Quickly he raised himself at her first word and gazed with enamoured looks at the amber folds of hair, her glowing face; and with panting breath his eyes rested upon the round fulness of her form as it palpitated with rightful perturbance.

"Betake thyself before I inform Lord Cedric of thy presence!" And she rapped smartly her knife-handle upon the table. "Betake thyself, begone!" He did not stir nor find breath until

she stood forth from the table and he saw her beauteous being from head to dainty toe of convent sandal. Then he found voice, and in broad Scotch begged her clemency, advancing toward her the while and almost kneeling in his humility.

"If I did not know the queen——"

"'Tis presuming for thee to speak of knowing her; thou dishonourest the noble plaid thou wearest. Begone from me, sir, instantly. Begone, I say!"

"Nay, I shall not begone. Tell me who thou art, I know thee not!"

"Tell thee? Nay, 'twould displease my lord if he knew I held converse with thee thus. He would no doubt send thee from the castle."

"But who is thy lord, pray?"

"Lord Cedric of Crandlemar!"

"Ah, ah,—but it does not displease him. Lord Cedric says thou shalt talk to him the balance of his days." The maid shrunk further from him in sheer loathing. At the moment Janet entered, and the rough Scot turned upon her, and in a voice of command, said,—

"Who is this maid, woman?" Janet scanned him for a moment and a bit of truth flashed upon her.

"'Tis the honoured daughter of Sir John Penwick," and she bowed to the floor.

"Ah! ah!!" He retreated in dismay and for a moment was silent, encumbered with emo-

tions of surprise, admiration, wonderment and doubt. "Then thou art my ward and thou hatest me already ——"

"Thou, thou Lord Cedric, the master of this great house?" And Katherine in the confidence of Janet's presence, laughed in scorn and swept from the room disdaining his commands to remain longer. For a moment he stood stunned as it were; then started toward the door and looked after their retreating forms, exclaiming the while,—

"Ah!—ah!! Thou a convent baggage ordering the lord of the castle from thy presence. Never have I been so talked to before. Damn me, I love thy gorgeous self, thy beauteous body; thou my ward to have and to hold. I may if I choose say to thee, thou shalt, or thou shalt not. Hey, hey, there, Christopher!" He knocked loudly upon the panelling of the door. A lackey entered trepidated. "Go and bring in haste from Wasson the letter written by Sir John Penwick. Haste thee, mind!" He turned to the table as if the shadow of her being still rested there and spoke the continuation of his thought. "'Tis a bit of paper, Mistress Katherine, that has become of more worth than a king's ransom. The last will and testament of Sir John Penwick bequeathing to my father a priceless property,— Thou wert slow, Christopher, but I forgive thee." He tore the letter from the lackey's hands and

sat upon the chair drawing the candle to his convenience and read aloud:

"'Cedric: When we parted twenty odd years ago 'twas in anger. I hope thou hast forgotten it as I have.' My poor father had forgotten and yearned to tell him so. 'I'm upon my deathbed and my consolation is the remembrance of our mutual faith plighted to each other a short time before our quarrel. 'Twas the bit of Scotch blood in thee that brought us to contentious wrangle. I 'minded thee at the time thou wouldst grieve for thy hot words, and 'tis a balm I send thee for thy grieved heart; 'tis my baby Kate'— Baby, baby of course I thought her so and sent her to a nurse's nookery at the top of the towers to silence the wench's squawkings, and gave Stephen the care of the freshest young heifer, that the youngster might not lack for proper food, 'now under her nurse's care in the Ursuline Convent at Quebec. The child has been environed with all that is pure and good, and will come to thee with the sweet incense of the cloister clinging about her. I have heard but once of thee, and 'twas that thy young wife died leaving thee without heirs. If such be so, thou wilt find a solace in my baby. Guard her as thine own. I have only enough gold to send her with her nurse to thy protection.' She will be obliged to come to me for all things, and I will spoil my own pleasure by giving her before she

asks. 'In my epistle to Janet Wadham I spoke of moneys and estates being in thy hands. 'Tis a lie that will bring to thy mind more vividly than aught else my personality—*suppressio veri;* but if thou findest a like propensity in my babe, thou wilt deal gently but firmly with her for its correction. I give into thy keeping more than house, lands or titles. I would direct clemency toward my beloved servant; she has proven most faithful. My wife truly loved her and at her child's birth was constantly tended by the vigilant Janet; and 'twas her desire she should remain always with the babe. Enclosed thou will find a letter to be given to my daughter upon her arrival to thy care; 'tis a letter of both welcome and farewell. Some day thou must tell her I am gone on my last journey, tell her when she is surrounded by pleasant distractions that she may not grieve. She knows naught of trouble, neither would I have her know. 'Tis possible she may have some religious ideas that are not identical with thine. She may be laden with all sorts of shrines, picture-books, candles, crosses and beads; these religion's playthings thou of sterner mould wilt hardly consider. My last wish and the one of greatest import to my child is that thou find for her a spouse of rank and fortune; 'tis my desire that she marry early to such an one. Ah, Cedric, if thou had hadst a son, their union would have been our delight; for when thou seest my

Kate thou wilt see the most beautiful thing in life.'

"Aye, she is the most beautiful thing in life. She is mine, my very own, her father gives her to me for marriage—marriage, and 'tis a speedy one he asks, and she shall have it. I love her, love her, my whole being throbs with mad desire. She is the sweetest maid on earth, and I drink from the cup upon which her rich, red lips have rested; ah, 'tis sweet!" He poured a bumper and drank, then flung from the room with great strides.

CHAPTER III

THE BALL

MEANWHILE Mistress Katherine sat before the fire in the tower nookery while Janet unpacked the luggage.

"'Twould not be fitting for Lord Cedric to have such a man within his house as guest!"

"Neither has he, Lambkin; 'tis his Lordship himself." Her voice rang truth and Katherine turned dismayed,—

"Nay, Janet, the man was a drunken fool! Surely, surely thou dost not mean thy sayings. He is not a fit person to be in so great a castle. Thou art shamming!"

"I mean every word; 'tis my Lord *en masque*, for to-night there is to be a great and magnificent spectacle."

"And what does that mean, Janet?"

"It means there is to be a masque ball, and my Lord Cedric is in his costume, and he does not look like that at all. We may be sure he appears quite the opposite when apparelled in his usual dress."

"But his tongue, he cannot change that!"

"Thou wilt have to wait and see for thyself,

and fortune favours, for now thou wilt not have long to wait. I saw his wicked young eyes—too young for so old a man, as it appeared—directing enamoured darts upon thee."

"But art thou not afraid of so oath-beladen tongue? He is dreadfully profane!"

"He has already seen his peril and will drop his oaths like jetsam and wilt come to thee with flotsamy oglings and tender nothings and bow and smirk; and thou wilt find thyself an old man's sweetheart."

"Janet, can we not find some point of observation where we may look upon the maskers unseen?"

"Thou art speaking my own mind. I will look about and find some seclusion that thou mayest look and sate thine eyes upon Royalty; and thou wilt gaze and gaze and make mental annotations, and to-morrow thou wilt begin to preen thy feathers preparatory to flying forth; but first thou must lie down and sleep three full hours, 'tis then the ball will be at its height, and thou wilt feel refreshed and ready to amuse me with thy observations. 'Twill be the grandest sight for thee. I have seen many but none so gorgeous as this is to be."

Janet went upon a tour of exploration and finding what she desired in the way of a quiet corner returned for Katherine. They passed down flights of steps, through halls, and came to

a large corridor that opened upon a gallery which encircled the ballroom, save where it was cleft by a great stairway. As they stood looking over the railing, 'twas like looking down upon an immense concave opal, peopled by the gorgeously apparelled. Myriad tints seeming to assimulate and focus wherever the eyes rested. Gilt bewreathed pillars, mouldings, shimmering satin, lights, jewels, flowers, ceiling, gallery and parquetry appeared like a homogeneous mass of opal. Mistress Katherine could not speak, her perturbed spirit was silent, she held to Janet and the curtain that hung at the arch, and breathed in the perfume.

"Canst see thy lord yonder?"

"Nay, I see all collectively, but nothing individually; my eyes fail to separate this from that."

"Perhaps if thou couldst whip them to his ugly frame, 'twould prove an antidote."

"'Twill come in time,—I can now discern that 'tis the folk that art moving and not the flowers and lights. I see a red figure seeming to hurry among the dancers, looking this way and that, peering and peeping; he has lost something."

"'Tis more probable he is looking for what he has found; 'tis thy stairway-beau with the rose; he has retrieved it and is hot upon the chase again. He is looking for thee.—'Tis vain my lord-devil, thou hadst better use the time to swathe thy feet in asbestos-flax."

The music of the passacaglia floated up and Katherine drank in its minor sweetness. Presently the dance changed into the chaconne with its prominent bass theme, again turning to the poetic and stately sarabande.

"Now I do see the Scot; he is by far the most homely figure anywhere, and yet, he is graceful, and it must be a very great beauty with him. How could the master of so great a house look so?" The music changed into a sprightly gavotte, Katherine's ears fairly tingled with the confusion of sound. She lay her head upon Janet's bosom as if drunk with the surfeit of music.

"'Tis more than I could have dreamed. Didst ever see anything so beautiful before? It seems years ago since we were within convent walls!"

"'Twill bring thy seeming nearer if thy lord proposes a speedy return to the cloister."

"Nay, I would not go."

"Ah, then, enjoy the present and think of moments and not cycles. Here thou shalt sit on this low divan, behind this tripod of roses; there, thou canst hear what they whisper when the music ceases." They sat ensconced in flowers and drapings of satin brocade, looking down upon splendidly and wonderfully dressed princes and dukes, lords and counts, with their ladies dancing the gavotte. There was the perfection of beauty and stateliness and romance. The few unmasked faces were smiling and bright with

powder and rouge; dainty hands flourished fans; and there was the low click of high heels upon the parquetry. Jewels flashed and brocades gleamed; a shimmering accompaniment completing the symmetry of the brilliant dance. It was not long before Janet called her companion's attention to the lord of the castle. He was dancing now with a very beautiful woman, even more so than the one before.

"He steps lightly, being so bandied. Now I think on it, 'twere possible his legs were cushioned thus to hide a senile thinness! 'Tis human nature when badgered by excess of limit to flounder into limitless excess. Look upon the Burgomaster at thy feet with a surfeit of good round legs, he is unfortunate for being in excess, he cannot whittle down. 'Tis a queer being with whom he dances,—here comes a queen, see, she stops beneath thee,—sh—'Constance,' my lord devil calls her, 'Constance'; what thinkest thou, is she not beautiful?"

"See the bones in her neck, Janet, they protrude like pulpy blisters, and she looks flat of chest for a waist so abbreviated."

"I see thine eyes are ever upon nature, and 'tis best if thy gaze can penetrate the heart as well."

"Surely we have intuition, and I like not Constance."

"How about my lord with the rose?"

"I like him."

"Oh, impressionable youth! 'thou art the gilded sand from which the kiss of a wave washes every impress.' Tune thy myriad atoms to imitate the rock, and gird thyself with strength to meet the battery of onrushing breakers that grind against thee! Be careful, my Lambkin, fall not in love with the first handsome face thou seest." The music ceased; there was naught of sound, but a babble of voice and soft, gay laughter. The guests passed up the grand stairway, and between the pillars that guarded the entrance to the vaulted gallery beyond. Immediately beneath, where Katherine and her nurse sat, were Constance and her Mephistophelian consort. The former was saying:

"And thou dost say she is extremely beautiful? In what particular is this queen of thine so entrancing, is it in face or form?"

"Her face is divine, and her form ravishes one with delight."

"She is indeed fortunate to be such a goddess. If she is a lady-in-waiting to the Royal suite she will depart to-morrow!" and there was relief in the supposition. Constance continued: "I saw my kinsman's list of invitation, and among them all there was not one fitting thy description of this paragon, Adrian!"

"She had the bearing of a princess; she must be a person of note!"

"Adrian,"—and she grasped his arm tightly,—

"dost think, thou knowing the ways of men, Cedric could have some bright being here to keep him from the dumps, and when guests are present, hides her in some remoteness?" There was more in Constance' meaning than what she said.

"Nay, nay, any man would be proud to—yet, if Cedric loved he would be very jealous!"

"Thinkest thou so?"

"I am positive. To-morrow, Constance, I will watch the departure of the guests, and, if I find not the maid, I will let thee know, and we will pounce upon my Lord Cedric and have him bring her to our notice."

"Nay, Adrian, I'll tell thee a better way. If she departs not with the company to-morrow, I will search the castle and find her; for I know every cranny. I will bring about a meeting, so thou mayest beau her privately and win her love before Cedric knows aught; 'twill be a grand joke to play upon him, and 'twill pay him back for trying to hide from us the gem of his castle." They looked into each other's eyes but an instant, and they each understood the other.

"'Tis a compact, Constance. 'Twill be sweet to meet her in secret. God grant she may be a member of my lord's household!" Like a prayer Constance uttered after him, as they traversed the room to the great stairway,—

"God grant it may not be so!"

"Unlike Hamlet's prayer, their words and

thoughts both fly up, and to such a prayer they will undoubtedly receive an answer; but whether 'twill be satisfactory to the one or the other, remains to be seen, as the destination of their supplications was a long way this side of heaven—" said Janet, as she wrapped her mistress in her grey convent cape and led her without the gallery.

"Is it possible I was the object of discussion, Janet?"

"'Tis probable. The first trophy thou hast gained without appearing upon the field."

"And what is that?"

"A woman's hate; thy rival hast given thee the first token of success." They had reached the tower chamber and Janet began to prepare her mistress for bed.

"I cannot understand thee, I cannot grasp thy meaning."

"Neither would I have thee understand; for if I took from thee thy innocent mind, I would deprive thee of thy best weapon. Thou hadst better chatter of thy poor, grey frock thou wilt don on the morrow."

Katherine stood before a small mirror divested of her outer garments. The soft white thing that bound her graceful, sloping shoulders, had fallen loose displaying her glorious white neck and bosom. Janet caught the mirrored reflection and understood and answered,—

"Nay, thou hast no pulpy blisters, neither

shalt have while I feed thee on pap and rub thee with oil; nor yet a flat chest for thy shoulders are sunk from prominence by its fulness."

"Shall I wear a low bodice thus, Janet?"

"Aye, Lambkin."

"And high-heeled boots and stays,—I must have stays before I appear at my lord's table."

"Thou shalt not have that 'twould squeeze thy beauteous mould." The faithful Janet unbound her nursling as if she had been a tiny babe and swathed her in a soft, warm thing, and bade her get to bed. Katherine jumped to the middle and lay panting, with happy eyes that had naught of sleep in them, until on a sudden Janet's voice rung like a menace on her ears.

"Thou hast forgotten thy rosary; thou hast neither said an *Ave Maria* or a *Pater Noster* since our arrival. Thou wouldst neglect thy religion, and 'tis thy own, sweet precious self that will pay the penalty."

"Nay, nay, Janet, I will say them ten times to make up for my forgetfulness." She sprung from her bed.

"To bed, to bed; thou shalt not kneel upon the floor in this ice-bound chamber. Here, take thy beads and say them once and close thy azure eyes." Janet watched until the wax-like lids drooped, then softly made fast the doors. She flung herself into a great chintz-covered chair and fell asleep before the bright fire.

CHAPTER IV

HIS LORDSHIP'S PROPOSAL

SHE did not waken until aroused by the grinding of wheels upon the gravel beneath the window. A servant brought coals and wood and built a roaring fire that warmed her chilled bones. She ordered her mistress' breakfast for eleven o'clock, and locking the door upon the retreating lackey, settled herself in the chair again and fell asleep. She was next awakened by a smart rap upon the door. The servant stood upon the threshold gazing at the vision of beauty that had raised upon her elbow in the bed, and was looking with inquiring eyes.

"His Lordship begs Mistress Penwick to step to the library after her breakfast."

"Step, to be sure, thou hadst better bring a chariot to cart her there, and 'twould be out of the question for her to go before getting anything into her stomach to strengthen her for the journey."

"Shall I tell him so, mum?" said the servant, with a look of roguery in his eyes.

"'Twould become thee better to tell him without asking if thou shouldst. Avaunt, get thee gone

on thy mission." Then turning to Katherine,— "'Twould have to come sooner or later and 'tis best sooner I'm thinking," and Janet stepped to draw the curtains to let in but a sickly grey light. "Ah, there is a great snowstorm! and there seems to be a large party about to set forth a hunting." And indeed there arose to their ears a great noise of baying hounds and the tramping of horses in the courtyard, and voices were raised high and merry. There was a rattle of spurs and champing of bits; and as the two women looked from the window the party set forth.

"Thou wilt go with me, Janet?"

"As far as the library door. I will listen and peep through the keyhole when no one is passing."

A lackey came to conduct Mistress Katherine below. He looked surprised at Janet as she followed them, neither was his curiosity appeased when Mistress Penwick passed through the library door, and the severe-faced Janet sat down upon a ponderous chair in the corridor just outside.

'Twas a great room with enormous fireplaces, and in front of one of them stood Lord Cedric. There was a smile on his face as he noted his ward's surprise. She looked upon him with interest and finally spoke,—

"Lord Cedric sent for me; he is not here," and she retreated as if to leave the room.

"Nay, do not leave until thou hast become acquainted with Cedric of Crandlemar." He held out his hand to her longingly, pleadingly, and stood thus before her; his figure of an Adonis silhouetted by the flames that reached above his head in the great chimney behind him. His face and form was a match for her own. A hunting-coat wrapped his broad shoulders; his beauteous limbs were encased in high-field boots, showing well his fine masculine mould.

"How many lords of Crandlemar are there?" she asked, almost contemptuously.

"One, only," and he still held out his hand with a gesture of entreaty. "I was the ill-humoured, boisterous man in Scotch attire last night. I beg thee to forgive and forget it. Come—come—thou art my ward."

"But my Lord Cedric is an old man, as old as my father, and is Scotch."

"Thou art speaking of my father; he has been dead five years. Thy father did not know of his death when he sent thee to England. And my mother"—his voice trembled—"died when I was born. I was reared without a woman's love. Angel was too old to teach me tenderness. She has tried to guide me; but Kate—thy father calls thee so—I have had no one to love me like thee. I have lived a wild, boisterous life in Scotland most of the time, and after father died I went to France. I have lived wickedly, Kate; I have

given myself over to oaths, and—and—and—drink;—'twas so last night when I saw for the first time the woman I loved; who was as fair in face, form and soul, as all I had ever pictured or dreamed. Wilt thou forget my course tongue and try—try—to—to—to love me, Kate. Thou wilt say 'tis soon to speak so to thee; but why keep back that 'tis best for me to say and thou to know?" She could not mistake the ring of truth in his voice that was now so pleading.

"Come, come,"— and as if a happy thought occurred, reached into his pocket and drew forth a letter;—"here is thy proof that I am Lord Cedric; thy father's letter," he held it toward her. She came and reached her hand for it, timidly. His Lordship was one of the most passionate of youths, nor could he restrain his ardour. He caught her hand and drew her to him, meeting her graceful body with his own; his hot breath was upon her hair, and he panted forth; —"Kate, Kate, I love thee," his arm was reaching about her, when she called Janet stoutly. The door was flung open and the nurse's face looked upon the youth like an ominous thing of strength,—then surprise broke over it and she spoke forth,—

"Who art thou, perfidious youth?"

"I am Cedric of Crandlemar, and I was saluting my ward." Janet took her mistress from him as

he half supported her, and sat down, drawing her into her lap. Katherine fell to weeping.

"What has happened to thee, Lambkin?"

"I don't know," sobbed Katherine, "assure me if 'tis Lord Cedric."

"We will accept him, anyway, for 'tis a better subject than my Lord Scot of last night." Thereupon Cedric fell upon one knee at Janet's feet, and bent his handsome head to Katherine's hand and kissed it.

"Nay, nay, thy lips burn me, and I hate thee for it!" She wiped her hand upon her dress, and turned her head from Janet's bosom and cast a scornful glance through her tears.

"I love her, Janet, and she hates me. Her father gave her to me to love and guard and—marry, 'tis in the letter so; and she shall ——"

"Thou talkest too strong to so young a maid; thou must remember that she is but fifteen, and never used to beaux. Thou art the first man beside her father to so much as touch her hand."

"She fifteen, 'tis not possible!" and his enamoured glance swept her form,—"'tis not possible." Mistress Katherine's colour blenched and heightened, for the ardent masculine eyes made her like and hate in turn; his countenance glowed with warm youthfulness which both attracted and repulsed her; and she hid her face again upon Janet's shoulder.

"'Tis rather young to become wife, but I cannot live away from her, I must have her."

"Nay, thou must wait until she is past sixteen, and knows her own mind."

"I cannot wait, Janet, I am too inflammable, she consumes me with her beauty."

"Then I had better take her where thou canst not see her."

"Nay, nay, she shall not leave me for a day nor hour. She is mine absolutely, and I'll have her. I have found what is more precious than all else to me." As Katherine's eyes were hid, Janet placed her fingers upon her lips, enjoining silence upon the passionate man before her. 'Twas a simple thing, but Cedric knew from that moment he had gained a powerful ally. He rose to his feet, and, in softened tones, continued,—"'Tis the first time I have ever loved, and 'tis natural I should be impetuous;" then in a tone that was full of magnanimity,—"I will give thee time to rest from thy long journey before we buy the wedding garments, I will give thee a whole week." Then 'twas that Katherine spoke,—

"A whole week, indeed, I shall not marry thee at all, never, I hate thee. Thou wilt give me my heritage and I will go from thy house; my father gave it and me into thy father's care not thine, I will write to him at once and tell him of this terrible mistake."

"Thy father is—" he caught himself in time.

"Thy father is—what?" And she looked at him closely.

"Is too far away over seas, and—might be hard to find."

"Then I will go to him."

"Thou wilt remain where thou art."

"Thou talkest like foolish children. 'Twould better become thee to prattle of frocks and fixings for my Lady Penwick. Your Lordship will see to it at once?" It was a happy suggestion. Cedric leant over Katherine.

"Come, tell me what thou wilt have from London town? thou shalt have all thy heart asks for."

"Thou art generous with my belongings." 'Twas an unfriendly cut.

"Come, Mistress, what will thou have, make out a list and I will send it by a courier."

"I prefer to go myself."

"I have guests and cannot go with thee at the present,—and thou canst not go without me; but thou shalt have the more for this very cause. Come, tell me thy heart's desire. Be good to me Kate, I love thee so; I must tell thee, it cuts me to the quick to have thee so set against me. Thou wilt espouse me some day, sweet one?" Katherine stood up and shot a withering glance full upon him.

"Nay, nay, nay,—thou wilt let me go from thee!"

"I beg thy pardon, Mistress Penwick, I will urge thee no more now; but tell me thy wishes. Thou will have first of all, a beautiful hat with feathers reaching to thy shoulder-tips, and dainty brocade gowns with boots of the same hue, and jewelled fans, and ribbons and laces and all kinds of furbelows, and I will give thee to-day some jewels, rings, and ——"

"And a necklace like Constance has?" put in Katherine, unthinkingly.

"Constance—where didst thou see her?" His voice and manner showed annoyance. "Where didst see her, Kate?" There was a blush on her face as she answered,

"At the ball."

"Thou wert not there," he said, incredulously.

"Janet and I looked on from the gallery, and Constance stood beneath us. 'Twas a beautiful thing that encircled her throat."

"Aye, they were pearls; but thou shalt have a circlet that wilt not so hide thy pink hued neck. To-day, Kate, I will give thee some gems and thou shalt go with me to the great chests and see the laces they contain;—and thy colours, Kate, what are thy favourite colours?"

"I love white and violet." A happy smile covered Cedric's face.

"'Tis my mother's choice and by that I hit upon thy fancy as thou shalt soon see." Cedric racked his brain for more pleasant things to

say. "And thou shalt have a horse and learn to ride."

"Oh, Janet, to have a horse all my own! 'tis too good to be true; 'tis a thing I have dreamt of." And the delighted girl flung herself at Janet's feet and embraced her knees from sheer ecstasy. It seemed peace had come to stay; and for a moment Cedric looked upon her with eyes full of admiration and, yes, heart full of love; then,—

"Art sure thou hast thought of all thou wouldst have, is the list complete, Janet; canst thou not suggest something more? I will send it to one of the court mantua-makers and if thou sendest the proper measurements our lady will soon be a modish butterfly." At the word modish a sudden thought came to Katherine and she leant over and whispered in Janet's ear; then Janet said:

"She must have a pair of stays with each frock."

"Nay, nay, she shall not have stays to pinch so fair a mould; she shall not have stays, nay, nay, sweet Kate." 'Twas then Mistress Penwick flew into a passion. She clinched her fists and her face grew scarlet; she shook her head and threw glances like sword-thrusts at Cedric, and said not a word but stamped her foot. As she did so, she saw that in Cedric's eyes that made her calm her passion on a sudden. 'Twas steel

against steel. It was Janet's voice that drew Katherine's attention; for it had in it something it never had heretofore; it was full of reproach.

"Lambkin, thou art too young for either stays or such a show of passion. I beg thee to quench thy evil spirit, it does not become thee." Katherine bent her head and turned from them toward the door. Cedric called,

"Do not leave until we have all things settled! Kate, dost hear me speaking?" She pretended deaf ears. "Kate," he said, with emphasis, "dost hear me? Mistress Penwick, hear me, heed, heed!" he thundered, and stamped his foot, the spurs rattling upon the hearthstone. She turned about reluctantly and rested her hand upon the great oaken table, looking at Janet as if it had been she that had spoken. Cedric drew himself up proudly, and spoke in a firm, full voice,

"I am thy father, brother, guardian, anything that love could be to thee, and all that I have is thine, and when thou art with me thou mayest do as thy heart dictates, but when thou shalt cross yonder threshold thou shalt conduct thyself as becomes a daughter and mistress of the castle. I have beneath my roof guests—my kinswoman, Lady Constance, whom I have bidden to remain indefinitely, she being so near of kin has been mistress here; but, from the moment thou didst enter the portal of Cedric's house, 'twas

thou became mistress, thou—thou mistress of my home, and heart as well; thou wilt accept the former mission, and I will fight with all of cupid's weapons until thou dost accept the latter. 'Tis a pragmatic duty to follow my words and understand them and demean thyself accordingly. To-night thou wilt come to the drawing-room at the prandium hour, and 'twill be my pleasure to seat thee at table, and 'twould be best if I acknowledged our espousal."

"Nay, nay, I will not come then."

"Thou shalt come if thou art in the castle," Janet's scowling face under cover of the high-backed chair stopped his lordship's impetuosity, "hast a frock, Kate? thou shalt go to the chest and find for thee some bright thing and I will send from Crandlemar a woman to help thee with thy attire. Angel will come to take thee to see the jewels, and thou shalt have those thou carest to take. I would see thy choice, Kate. I can almost guess it now. So come, Kate, the storm without should insure good cheer within; and with thy bright face the castle will be aglow. Come, say *au revoir*, Kate." She held out her hand and faltered forth *au revoir*. There was the language of the convent in that one word and it rung sweet upon her ear. He took her hand between his own and bent and kissed it tenderly, "*au revoir*, *au revoir*," he said, then turned quickly from her.

Outside stood old flabby-face, as Janet pleased to call her, when alone with Katherine, but designated by the servants as Sophia.

"His Ludship ordered Mistress Penwick's room changed."

"Thou dost mean, rather, he advised a change of room; 'twould be difficult to convey the tower chamber elsewhere."

It was a beautiful room into which Sophia led them and beyond were others belonging to the same suite, all in white and gold, with mirrors and painted walls garlanded with cupids and floral wreaths, and silken curtains at bed and windows; and cushions and beautiful venuses and rare potpourri. And when they were quite alone Janet strutted up and down the rooms enjoying the fulness of her cup.

"'Tis more than thou dreamed again, eh, Lady Penwick? Thou hast fallen heir to a queen's portion without the ennui of satiety."

"Truly 'tis a wondrous castle; but Janet can Lord Cedric espouse me because he is my guardian?"

"Nay, child, but he loves thee, and he means to win thee if 'tis possible. He is young and self-willed and passionful, and he will have his own way. Dost like him, Lambkin?"

"Somewhat, but I hate him most."

"Thou wilt impeach thy sweet tongue by that viscid 'hate'; thou hadst better indulge in less

of devil's warfare and leave room for digestion of gentle peace. Thou hast bloomed into a beauteous maid, but thy temper hath blown also. My lord hast seen many beauties that he could have for the asking, and they are doubtless meek and gentle creatures with soft and ready answer; but if thy cantankerous untowardness continues he will set thee down as a shrewish wench and will heartily dislike thee."

"Nay, I would not have any one dislike me."

"Then cease thy uprisings." There came a low knock, and an old grey-haired woman stepped into the room with that in her face Janet stood up to honour. She advanced to Katherine and in a trembling voice said,

"Thou art my lord's ward,—ah, I remember thy father well; thou art a Penwick over and over again, I could see it with half an eye. I knew thy father when he was a mere lad, so high; he had as bonny a face as one cared to see. They tell me thou didst expect to see here my poor master; is't so? Aye,—well thou hast found his son, the blessedst man that walks the earth. He has a wicked, bad tongue at times, but he means nothing. I nursed him and his father, and am longing for a wife for his lordship." Then: "I am Angel Bodkin, and have come to conduct thee to the vaults." She led them forth, talking all the while.

CHAPTER V

BACCHUS AND BACCHANTES

Lady Constance had exhausted every means of procuring the desired information concerning the strange beauty in her kinsman's castle; and she became fretted and annoyed and was about to give up all hope, when she came suddenly upon the object of her search in the corridor; and the beauteous maid, grey-gowned and sandal-shoon, flitted by without deigning so much as a look. And my Lady Constance swept by with hate of this formidable creature in her evil heart. She felt it was almost understood that Lord Cedric would espouse her; she, Lady Constance Clarmot. To be sure, she was somewhat of riper years than he, but that counted for naught since they had always loved each other. She was of a great family and proud and had of her own, titles and estates and—yes, beauty. She fell to thinking of the many ways in which Cedric had shown his love for her. He had consulted her on all occasions upon the most trivial matters until the present instance. "Could it be possible she is some soft-natured wench that hath fallen beneath his eye and charmed him, and he has

brought her here? Nay, nay, he would not bring such an one beneath his roof while I remained, and yet I have but just come and he hath kept her hid; 'tis possible he will send her away at once." She soliloquized thus until the candles were brought, and the curtains drawn to shut out the storm, and she sat beneath her maid's hands heeding naught save her bitter thoughts. "What had become of Adrian? Why had he not been in to see her; surely by this time he had learned something being out the whole afternoon hunting, perhaps side by side with Cedric." Thus she fretted, and scolded her maid until it was time to go to the drawing-room.

It was a picturesque scene; the ancient castle with its crenellated tower, from which now pointed a tall flag-pole, the British Royal Ensign bound closely about it, its colours being distinctly visible through its casing of ice; for an immense quadruple-faced light was placed high up in the fork of a tree opposite the great window of the vaulted saloon, casting its beam to the very pinnacle of the ensign-staff; lighting the castle from end to end upon its northern side, where the great avenues converged. A shaft reluctantly and gloomily effused the near density of the forest; another ray gladdening the expectant eyes of the guest from Londonway; while yet another broad gleam sped the departing traveler over the threshold of the forest into the gloom-

environed pathway beyond. Upon every shelving projection of the unhewn stone structure was ice. The entire walls scintillated with a fairy brilliancy, and the trees as they swayed back and forth propelled by the unceasing wind caused such a coruscation of sparkles it fairly blinded the spectator. Beneath the spreading branches were a host of men, horses and dogs. The gay costumes of the huntsmen showing resplendent in the ice-bespangled light. The horns were lowered, and there was a confusion of tongues between groomsmen and lackeys; and there were shouts of welcome from the wide-open doorway of the servants' hall; for 'twas here the game was brought and laid upon the stone floor or hung upon pegs on the wall for the inspection of the guests. Lord Cedric leapt from his horse, throwing the reins to a waiting groom; strode into the hall with rattling spurs and flung through the rooms and up the stairway to his Lady Katherine's bower, and rapped smartly upon the panelling of the door. The vision that met his amorous eyes sent him hot and cold; and 'twas with difficulty he restrained himself from encircling her full, glowing body.

"The hours I have been from thee have seemed weeks, and I was of no use in the field; my gun would entangle in the low-hanging boughs; and on the wold my steed's feet were caught in the dry gorse, until I could not get

near enough to shoot anything. On the other hand, Cupid has arrowed me to the death, and I come,—a shade for thee to put life into; and the sight of thee is a life-giving thing." Katherine's face flamed with his warm words, and the consciousness of the beauty of her new adornment; for she stood before him in an amber shimmering stuff that clung to her lithe limbs, hiding not her slender ankle and her arched satin shoe, as her dress caught about a stool that held it. The short round waist betrayed the fulness of her form, and Cedric turned his eyes away from sheer giddiness, drunk with love. He spoke to Janet with quick breath:—"Bring her down to see the game."—Then, suddenly,—"Where are thy jewels, Kate?" He espied a casket, and hastening to it took from it rings, fitting them upon Mistress Penwick's tapering fingers, until her hand was heavy. Of other jewels she'd have none. "But thou must have a shoulder knot," said Cedric, and he took from the casket a glittering shoulder brooch of opals and clasped it in the satin of her frock, and drew from a tripod of white and gold a flaming jacqueminot and gave it into her hand and led her forth, followed closely by Janet. Down the great stairway he led her proudly, through corridor and passage, until they reached the servants' hall, where the clamour of voices and baying hounds was like pandemonium; and at the sound Mistress Pen-

wick drew back with fear. For a moment Cedric was sorely tried to keep from bending to those rose-bowed lips. She saw him hesitate, and stammered forth:

"Lead on, my lord!"

He swung open the door and instantly all eyes were set upon his fair ward. First his Lordship's face was exultant, then seeing Mistress Penwick's glances that pierced every masculine heart, and her dazzling beauty drunk in by all; his face grew dark, and jealousy possessed him, and fear crept in, and he vowed to wed her at the earliest moment.

"'Tis Sir John Penwick's daughter, Mistress Katherine Penwick, my father's ward," and he led her to their midst.

"She is a wondrous beauty," many murmured as they saw her.

"Dazzling, by God!" whispered some of the masculines that stood apart, and there were others that spoke not a word, but stood spellbound at her majestic mien. A gorgeously apparelled figure swept to his Lordship's side, and a little hand crept into his and black flashing eyes looked up, and a soft voice whispered,—

"Thou didst never speak of—this, the most charming of thy possessions, heretofore, Cedric. I knew not thou didst inherit so beauteous a being from thy father. But Sir John,—England has not heard of his death ——"

"Sh! sh! she does not know," Cedric answered.

"Not know — ah!" and Lady Constance drew from him and looked at Katherine with malice and thought evil; 'tis not Sir John's daughter, 'tis some trick Cedric plays upon his guests and me; it goes to show that his relations to her are ill, and his intentions are to raise her to our level. Nay, nay, Cedric, I will lift thee beyond such a thing. When he has time alone, I will gain his ear and taunt him with a debauched youth; free from heart or conscience; a rake to betray; and I will win him from beauteous, youthful Bacchante. 'Tis his pleasure to swear and swagger; but at twenty-three he should not begin to carouse with female beauty. 'Tis time, and I will tell him so, for him to bring a lady as wife to the castle. I will speak to him at once. He has gone too far."

Lord Cedric drew Katherine to inspect the trophies of the chase, and explained their kind and the mode of capture. She with others followed him; the gentler folk raising frocks from pools and streams of blood, thereby displaying high-heeled shoe and slender ankle and ruffles of rare lace; and they gathered close about Mistress Penwick, drinking in her simple convent ways of glance and gesture and fresh, young spirit.

Then his Lordship led them to the grand saloon. It was the glory of the castle, this great

room of forty feet in width and sixty in length. The ceiling supported upon either side by slender Corinthian pillars, was panelled and exquisitely frescoed with nude female figures that were reflected in the highly polished floor of marquetry woods. The walls were covered with old tapestries and rare pictures. There were two immense windows; the one at the south end of the room was quite twenty feet square of Egyptian style. The one to the north reached from floor to ceiling and from side to side. It was draped by a single ruby-coloured velvet curtain that was so artistically caught by rope-like cords of silk that, by a draw, could be lifted upward and to either side in luxurious folds, exposing the entire window. At present the great saloon was lighted by seven immense lustres of fifty candles each, and with twenty sconces each bearing fifteen candles. The effulgent gleam cast from these myriad flames upon polished woods, busts, statues, unique bric-a-brac, gildings, glass and ruby velvet produced the perfection of old-time splendour. And now, as the gallant beaux led in fair maidens, it gave the picture life. The great north window disclosed the ice-bound trees in all their primitive ruggedness. The snow and sleet were vigorously driven by the wind that howled continuously. The light from the forked-tree cast through the window rays that resembled moonlight, as they mingled with the radiance

within, while outside it twinkled with the sprightliness of old-fashioned humour.

Cedric of Crandlemar was noted among beaux old and young of his intimate acquaintance for the spicy diversions with which he entertained his friends, when they were so fortunate as to be present at his stag parties. Arriving home after a long absence, he opened his castle upon St. Valentine's eve with a ball, wherein his guests appeared in full court costume, in honour of the Royal guests. The weeks following had been filled with stately entertainment; and now his Royal and formal guests had departed, and the throng that passed into the great saloon were youths and maidens of neighbouring counties; some college friends and kinsmen. They entered with gay abandon. The beaux were whetted to great curiosity, for 'twas whispered among them that after a short evening with the ladies, there were to appear a bevy of London-town dancing girls, who would give them a highly flavoured entertainment; and, as if Bacchus had prematurely begun to disport himself in brain and leg of each beau, he set about to ogle and sigh and wish and—pull a stray curl upon some maiden's forehead or touch her glowing cheek with cold fingers, and some began to illustrate the *modus operandi* of taking certain game, while another danced a clog or contra-dance or Sir Roger de Coverley. The maidens caught the spirit and

answered back glance for glance, and being equipped for conquest let go the full battery of their woman's witchery. It made a charming spectacle of young and noble blood indulging in the abandon of the hour. There were dames that set the pace for modest maidenhood, that ogled with the younger beaux,—(as they do to this day). Lady Bettie Payne swept her fingers over the keys of an Italian spinet, that was ornamented with precious stones, and sat upon a table of coral-veined wood; she sung soft and tenderly of the amours of Corydon, and neither her voice nor the low tinkling of the spinet reached to the further end of the room where Adrian Cantemir played upon the grand harpsichord a dashing piece that was intended to charm at least, the beauteous Katherine, who stood near. Lord Cedric leant over and begged the Russian count to change the tune to a gavotte. He did so, and Cedric brought forth Katherine and placed her fair to watch his step till she might catch the changes. Thus he trained her carefully and with precision, and when Cantemir saw the trap that held him where he was and gave Lord Cedric the upper-hand, he fell into the spleen and played out of time, and Cedric flung around and caught his spur in Dame Seymour's petticoats, and he swore beneath his breath, and Katherine smiled at his discomfiture and her own untutored grace, and

she made bold and took a step or two on her own dependence. Then there chimed eight from the old French clock of black boule that sat upon a cabinet of tortoise-shell, and it stirred the swains to think of donning 'broidered waist-coats and high-heeled shoon preparatory to the prandial hour, when fresh game and old wine would strengthen stomach and head; and they bowed low over tapering fingers and cast a parting dart at female hearts, and climbed the great oaken stairway to don their fine beaux' dress.

'Twas eleven o' the clock when the gay company again entered the saloon; gentlemen in fresh curled periwigs and marvels of laces and 'broiderings. They were gay with post-prandium cheer and flushed with wine.

Lord Cedric clapped his hands and immediately from some curtained passage or gallery there was music; each instrument seeming to lead in contrapuntal skill. His Lordship led forth Katherine and others followed in the movement of the passacaille. Mistress Penwick was beneath a great lustre that shone down and set her shoulder knot ablaze with brilliancy, when Lady Constance passed and noted it. She bit her lip from sheer pain, for 'twas Cedric's mother's prized brooch, and through her heart fell a thunderbolt of fear; for now she knew he would not allow a baggage to wear a thing so valued by the mother whose memory he so loved. She

began to fear this beauteous thing could not be ousted so easily from her kinsman's castle; and her heart rebelled at thought of losing him for spouse. She raged within, reproaching herself for not hastening in woman's way his avowal; then she trembled and grew sick at heart, as she saw his glances that were so full of love; glances for which she would give the world to win. She, on a sudden, was famishing for this love she had heretofore held aloof from and yet would rather die than loose, aye, die a thousand deaths. In her heart she vowed vengeance on that 'twould come between them, and the thought strengthened her for battle, and when again she saw Cedric's eyes gazing with ardent desire upon Katherine, it was with comparative calmness. There appeared also a strange thing to her, that this beauty did not appear to notice Cedric—that is, with the notice due so handsome, rich and titled beau. There was not another in the room with so elegant and fine shape; of so great vigour and strength; none that could be so shaken and yet tender with passion; none that could so command with a look; none that had such pure, noble blood. And strange to say, for the first time she saw his weaker side; she saw he was both jealous and selfish; she could find a thousand matters pertaining to his lands and estates that she could find fault with. He was exacting and heartless with his tenants; not providing for

their welfare as he should, being so great a lord. He hardly allowed them religious privileges. The church was attached to the castle by a passage leading from the landing of the stairway in the library, and he had complained that the singing and preaching annoyed him, and had frequently closed the chapel for this cause, and yet a woman that held sway over such a man's heart could mould him to anything. Why, why had she not married him ere this? She would set about it at once and bring all these matters concerning his estates to his notice; 'twould look so noble; 'twas time the castle had a mistress, and who would better grace it than the fair Lady Constance of Cleed Hall? And in Adrian Cantemir she had an ally, for he was madly and desperately in love with Lord Cedric's ward. "I should like her for cousin; she would make Adrian a fine wife, indeed I think I should become quite proud of her," said Constance, as if the matter was already quite settled.

After dancing the stately gavotte, it appeared that the whole company became heavy and wished for retirement; it might have been a ruse on the part of beaux, and the fair ones fell into the trap; be it as it may, the ladies retired. Janet had been waiting at the top of the stairs for her mistress; but her smile of welcome turned to one of disgust as she saw her appear with Lady Constance' arm about her.

"Thou art commencing early, Lady Judas; I have not preened my eyes for nothing, and this I well know, thou art hot in pursuit of my Lord Cedric, and thou shalt not have him. 'Tis Mistress Penwick that will queen it here and make a noble consort for his Lordship," said Janet.

"May I come in a minute? Thou hast learnt I am Cedric's cousin, and I feel as though I must know thee at once for his sake."

"Aye, thou art most welcome, Lady Constance," replied Katherine. And they sat over the fire laughing and chatting. Katherine was all excitement and full of clatter, for 'twas her first "company," and she was a young lady and could now boast of tender looks and words from beaux. And her volubleness led her to tell of her convent life, of her sudden surprise and pleasure of coming to England; and on and on; and blushing, she thought with Constance that Adrian Cantemir was indeed very charming, and having become better acquainted with him, she felt sure she admired him quite as much, or more than, any one else; and she was so fond of music he fairly entranced her when he played.

"To-morrow he is to teach me battledore and shuttlecock in the library."

"'Tis great sport and a game that requires some skill," said Constance. And thus they talked for one good hour, and in the adjoining

room Janet fumed and fretted; for 'twas far past her child's bedtime.

"Such late hours are not conducive to youthful roundness and a clear colour," she grumbled. Constance yawned and declared she must retire; but she was thirsty and must have a drink, and yet she supposed she must do without, for all the maids and lackeys were abed.

"But the more I think of it, the more I want it. I will get it myself."

"And I will accompany thee, for I would like not to go alone in so great a house, when there is no one astir," said Katherine.

They started forth adown the stairs; and following silent, noiseless like a wraith was Janet, expectant, eager; for she felt she was to see the opening of a great battle. Constance led the way, carrying a taper. As they traversed some passage, their ears caught the sound of music. They listened a moment, then Constance proposed they snuff the candle and draw near the sound; "for very like the beaux were having an orgy," she said. And Katherine, full of adventure and deeming it a fine, young lady's trick—she had heard talk of such things among the older girls at the convent—opined "'twas the thing to do." And they followed the passage until an arched and curtained doorway but screened them from that 'twas within the grand saloon, and Constance made bold to draw aside

a finger-breadth of the sweeping curtain and peep within.

"Ah! ah! 'tis a beauteous sight!" and she turned from what she saw and drew the curtain to a generous opening; and the two with heads together looked through.

Every candle had been snuffed and through the great north window came the rays from the light in the forked tree that fell like moonlight athwart the saloon. In the centre of the broad gleam was a sylph-like form, keeping time to the music in a sort of phantom style of movement; twisting, shimmering folds that appeared to effuse a scintillation of opal shades. 'Twas the chaconne; slow, graceful and full of romance, the full major lifting and seeming to float, at last dying imperceptibly into the minor passacaille. About were seated, carelessly and after the manner of men who had pulled at the bottle for hours in the hunting field and were now somewhat overcome by warmth and *ennui*, beaux old and young, 'suaging their appetite of mouth and eye by wine and women.

"'Tis the King sets the pace!" said one, close to the curtain.

"Egad!" said another. "He not only sets it, but carries it along. He has fine wenches at his beck and call." 'Twas evident 'twas but the beginning of revelry; a sort of bacchanalian prelude to what might come later. No sooner was

this dance finished than another began. Some lithe creature came forth to dance, in bright scarlet, the passacaglia. The glasses were refilled and the noise became more boisterous; and the scandal more flagrant. The candles were set aglow again and tables were brought for those wishing to gamble. And one richly dressed and full of wine sprung upon a table and held aloft a glass and called forth:

"Here, here is to his Lordship of Crandlemar and to a long life of free and easy celibacy." Now 'twas said Lord Cedric could drink more without becoming undignified than any other man of his company, but it seemed he gave himself to the spirit of the moment and had drunk deep. When the young blood upon the table offered the toast, Cedric sprung as if shot to the table, where he staggered and would have fallen, had it not been for the youth who bore him up. Holtcolm, in his drunken anxiety for his neighbour's steadiness, stood near him and with tender, maudlin solicitude began to flick the grains of bergamot scented snuff from the lace of Lord Cedric's steenkirk. At the same time from the glass he held there spilled on his Lordship's brocaded coat of blue and silver a good half-pint of wine. Cedric upon being balanced had forgotten what he wanted to say, and turned to his supporter.

"What was it Holt-colm—I was goin' to

shay?" Neither could remember, so his Lordship continued with what seemed to weigh upon his mind:

"'Tis thish: 'tis my deshire thish should be made a memorable—a night worthy of remembrance. I'm about to espoushe my fair ward—and this is positively my lasht appearance *en bout*—I know and am fully aware *abondance de bien ne nuit* until a better comes. To-night will be my finale de-bauch—sho; tell the red beauty to come here." He sat down upon the table and gazed with heavy, drooping lids upon the dancing girl that came toward him. "Thou art a saucy baggage; but—hic—thou art false of colour and—hic—flesh. Thy lips and cheeks are stained with rouge—hic—and thy flesh—is—hic—pushed to prominence by high stays—by God, it turns my stomach to—nausea." And he turned over and lay flat upon the table. "Bring on another—shay—we must have the moonlight beauty again." Katherine was well frightened and made several efforts to persuade her companion to go away. It was part of Constance' programme to cause Katherine's disgust at sight of Cedric's wantonness. She felt it had been accomplished, and as there were other matters to be about, she turned with her and together they groped back up the stairs in the darkness, and found Janet feigning sleep in a chair before the fire. Constance yawned and declared herself to

be tired out, and bade Katherine *adieu*. Janet closed the door after her and in haste began putting her mistress to bed. And after giving her a bath and rubbing, she snuffed the candles and went to her own room to slip out again and go below stairs and find the curtained doorway, there to watch and wait for that which was to come. She had seen as much as Constance and Katherine, and she determined to see even more. She would know how Lord Cedric appeared in his cups. There was nothing anomalous in what was before her; 'twas as she had often seen in the grand house in which she had served as maid; the same licentiousness, wild riot and debaucheries that have been since the world stood. She saw 'twas Cedric that drank as deep as any, and could rip out oaths as trippingly as his swollen tongue would allow; but he was neither vulgar nor lewd. Janet looked with pride at his clear flushed face, so handsomely featured; his jewelled hands and fine round legs that tapered to slender ankles. 'Twould be a fine pair when he espoused her mistress, and she would help him to it as soon as he liked. Her heart went out to him the more when she saw he cared not for the favours offered him by the dancing wenches as they touched his flowing black curls with caressing hands. He turned upon his stomach on the table and hid his face in his hands and remained thus until the candles were again snuffed and a

maid came out into the improvised moonlight in gipsy dress and a fortune-teller's cup and wand. She wore a masque and veil tight wrapped about her head. She danced with less skill than any that had come before. She lisped forth 'twas her trade to tell fortunes, and thereupon a fop reached forth and pulled her to him, and she began a startling story that had somewhat of truth in it; and to each one her assertions or predictions had so much of truth in them it provoked interest among them all. Lord Cedric called from the table:

"The wench tells ear-splitting truths; send her here, she shall give my pasht, present—and future." If they had not been so blinded by wine, they might have noticed her haste to go to his bidding. She looked closely at his hand and the sediment of his wine-cup.

"Thou art madly and blindly in love!" said she, lispingly.

"Good! good!" was sent forth from those about; and Cedric struck his fist upon the table,—

"'Madly'—yes; but by God not 'blindly'! haste on, wench."

"She loves admiration ——"

"She would not be half a woman if she ——"

"She is in love with one of Russian birth," went on the gipsy. Cedric frowned and held quiet. "There is one who hast loved thee from

early childhood—a—a kinswoman—she would make thee a noble spouse and love thee well with a warm nature to match thine own."

"Thou tellest false, for I know not such an one. I have loved many kinswomen since childhood, and they have loved me, but not to espousal!"

"'Tis here—her name—'tis—C-o-n-s——"

"Constance, by God! but there thy lisping tongue prattles ill, for she loves me as a brother, and I love her as if she were my sister." Now the gipsy drew back as if the man before her had stricken her, then hastened to cover her emotion with a sudden look into the cup and an exclamation of—

"Ah! ah!"

"What seest thou?" said Cedric.

"A thing that means more to thee than aught else; 'tis an awful thing if thou shouldst choose wrong!"

"Haste, wench, what is it?" Cedric was growing impatient.

"Thy kinswoman will bring thee a fine heir——"

"By God, the other will bring me a dozen then!"

"Nay, 'tis not so, she—" She stepped close to his ear and whispered.

"Thousand devils, thou infernal, lying pot-house brawler—" and Cedric glared fiercely

upon her and bent forward, his hand falling upon his sword-hilt; then he grew red at his hot action, and looked about to see if 'twas noticed. "Get thee gone, thou saucy, lisping minx." The poor thing was well-nigh distraught with fear of this man whose anger came like a thunderbolt, and she fell heavy upon the lackey who conducted her forth. She slipped through the corridors like a fast fleeting shadow, and Janet followed her close and saw her enter a certain chamber apart where she was met by one of the dancers; and 'twas Lady Constance that threw from her the gipsy attire and put a bag of gold in the celebrated Babbet's waiting fingers; and with a warning pressure of finger-on-lip, she came forth and fled to her own grand apartments, and Janet watched until the latch clicked upon this great mistress of beauty, title, wealth and virtue.

CHAPTER VI

JANET'S PHILOSOPHY

"THIS world of ours hangs midway 'twixt zenith and nadir: the superior and inferior: the positive and negative; and 'tis a pertinent thought that susceptible human nature takes on the characteristic of the one or the other. One is away up in zenithdom or away down in nadirdom, one is not content to go along the half-way place and see the good that lies ever before them. But, again, there are natures that are not susceptible to extremes; as a simile: a maid whose soul is ever vibrant with the ineffable joys of the world to come, walks by the seashore and mayhap beholds the full moon rise from the water and cast to her very feet a pathway of gold, and she will quickly join herself to those who see like visions, and pathway will lie against pathway and produce a sea of gold; on the other hand, if she be a foolish virgin and looks not before her, but tosses high head in pride or walks with downcast eyes and smiles and blushes and smirks and flings aside thoughts of deity, until she becomes submerged; on a sudden Gabriel will blow and the world will cease revolving, and then—where wilt thou be, oh, maid that

hath fluttered from sweet to sweet and forgotten thy prayers?" There came a great happy sigh from the testered bed—

"Thou hast powerful breath, Janet, and 'twas an immense bitterwort bush thou were beating about. I am sorry I forgot my prayers. I will say them twenty times to-day, to make up."

"And it's the heathen that repeateth a prayer oft; thou hadst better say 'God, have mercy upon my untowardness!' once, from thy heart, than to say thy rosary from now until doom with thy mind upon a bumptious Russian."

"What is the day, Janet?"

"'Tis as bleak and stormy as one could wish."

"What is the hour?"

"Eleven."

"Eleven? and I was to meet Count Adrian at this very hour. He is to teach me battledore and shuttlecock."

"'Tis a fussy game, played more with the heart than hand; canst give it up; let me rub thee to sleep again?"

"Nay, for I would not disappoint him or—myself."

An hour later she stood opposite the count in the great library, swinging the battledore with grace. There was much soft laughter and gay repartee; and Adrian followed the movements of Katherine's lithe form, clad in the soft, clinging grey of the convent. She became remiss;

for Adrian's glances were confusing, and intentional laches were made by him, that he might come near her, almost touching her hair in bending to recover the ball. She was flushed and eager, triumphant of a fine return, when the door flew open and in came a number of gallants, among whom was Lord Cedric. His face flushed a warm red and he shot a glance of jealousy at Adrian as he bent low over Katherine's hand. After a few commonplace remarks, they passed on up the stairway to the broad landing, on which was an arched door that led to the passage opening into the organ loft of the chapel. In a few moments there came the sound of the organ. Kathêrine swung low her battledore and breathed forth :

"Let us listen; 'tis sweet, who plays, dost know ?"

"'Tis St. Mar, a fine fellow ; a soldier, duelist and gallant."

"'Thou dost flank duelist by two words that should scorn being so separated !'"

"'Twas a happy wording ; for if thou shouldst meet him, thou wilt fall but two-thirds in love, whereas, if otherwise worded 'twould be altogether."

"Thou art giving my heart an evil reputation; for after all 'tis not so easy won."

"'Tis true, as I know, more than any one else, for my heart misgave me from the moment I

first set eyes on thy beauteous countenance; and since I have been in wild despair, not knowing if thou hast a heart for any save thy nurse and my Lord Cedric; for 'tis to them thy heart seems bent." There was neither shadow nor movement of fair expression on Mistress Penwick's face, as she answered calmly,—

"Thou sayest well. I love my nurse—she has been mother too, and I honour Lord Cedric as a good man should be honoured, and one whom my father chose to be his daughter's guardian and holder in trust of her estates."

"Estates"—'twas a grand word and went straight to Cantemir's heart; for 'twas something to espouse so beautiful a maiden that had demesne as well.

Katherine was listening to the chords of the organ, and she bent forward eagerly. Her thoughts flew back to the convent where she had enjoyed a pure religious life undisturbed by the trammels of the great outer world.

"Let us go," said she, "I would see who 'tis that plays!"

She led the way up the broad stairs and through the passage into the organ loft, and at first sight of her Cedric was well-nigh beside himself with delight; for he took it, she had come to be with him. There was a young fop at the organ in rich and modish attire, but otherwise of unattractive and common appearance.

Katherine cast upon him her entire attention, and there came that in her face that drew the glance of every eye. 'Twas as if she was entranced with the player, as well as the sounds he brought forth from the organ. Cedric bethought him 'twas an unfortunate oversight to have learnt not to thrum upon some sort of thing wherewith to draw the attention if not admiration of such a maid as this. And he straightway made avowal to send at once for tutor and instrument; a violin, when played as he might learn to, would perhaps be as successful in its lodestone requirements as any other thrumming machine. "'Twas an instrument could be handled to such an effect. A man could so well show white, jewelled fingers; display a rare steenkirk to pillow it upon; and withal, a man could stand free and sway his body gracefully this way and that; yes, 'tis the thing to do; she may yet look at me as she now looks at St. Mar!" so thought Cedric. The piece was soft and gentle, with a pathetic motif running through it. Katherine became so rapt she drew closer and closer, until at last she stood beside St. Mar. He became confused and halted, and finally left off altogether and turned to read the admiration in the azure blue of her eyes.

"Thou art from France, and dost thou know many of the great musicians?"

"Aye, a great many——"

"Hast thou met the great Alessandro Scarlatti? I understand he created a *furore* as he passed through Paris from London."

"'Tis true, and I was most fortunate to hear him play portions of '*L'Onesta nell Amore.*' Queen Christina herself accompanied him to Paris, and wherever he played she was not far away."

"We used much of his sacred music at the convent; 'tis such warm, tender and sympathetic harmony. He must be a very great man!"

"He hath a son, Domenico, not two years old, who already shows a great ear for his father's music; and they say he will even be a greater musician than his father. It is possible Alessandro will visit London."

"'Twould be wondrous fine! I will go and hear him play, surely"—Cedric interrupted their musical converse,—

"'Tis cold for thee, I fear, in this damp place; I beg thee to allow me to lead thee to the library." And without further words he led her away, through the library and on beyond to the saloon, where he begged her to favour him with songs he was quite sure she could sing, naming those he most wished to hear.

Then in came Lady Bettie Payne with three or four others, and they babbled and chattered, and as Lord Cedric stood near he heard them speak of Lady Constance' indisposition.

"Ah, poor Constance, I was not aware she was ill!" said he, and he went forth to inquire of her condition and find if aught could be done for her enlivenment to health and spirits. When he returned and saw Katherine so surrounded, and his guests engaged at cards and battledore and music, and some in converse as to whether they should ride forth to the chase, he was somehow stirred to think of Constance lying alone in her chamber; and there recurred to him the tale of the night before; 'twas she that loved him. He felt sorry for her if such a thing were true; but 'twas not possible, and to convince himself he would go to her and give her the brotherly kiss as heretofore, and take notice if there was aught in her manner to denote verification of the miserable gipsy's story. He would put an end to such feeling, if 'twere there. He sent word if he might see her for himself, and be assured her illness was not feigned, in order she might shirk the duty—like a wicked sister—of presenting her fair face for the enlightenment of the gloom that seemed about to penetrate, from without, the castle walls.

Constance lay propped amongst pillows, in a gorgeous *peignoir* of lace, arranged for the moment to display advantageously her plump arms and a slender white neck encircled with pearls. Her brow was high and narrow; her dark hair was carefully arranged in wavy folds upon the pil-

low; her eyes, under drooping lids, glittered coldly and imperiously. The nose was straight, and too thin for beauty. Her lips, touched with rouge, were also thin and full of arrogance. There she lay, impatient for the love of this one man, who was e'en now at the door.

When Constance was a baby, she had watched Cedric upon his nurse's knee taking his pap, and a little later amused him with her dolls. She had played with him at bat and ball; had ridden astride behind him upon a frisking pony; had learned and used the same oaths when none were by to note her language but grooms and stable-boys—always when Angel, the head nurse, was not about. She would outswear the young lad and then tease him because he could not find words to equal hers. They had played at "Lord and Lady," and rode about the terraces in a miniature sedan chair, and cooks and scullions winked and nodded, wisely and predictively. And when they came to man's and woman's estate, Cedric's regard for her was as a brother's; but hers for him, alas! was deep love. It seemed to her as if the world was just beginning; a bright, glorious world full of untold wealth of love, when she thought perhaps she might yet win him for her own; and indeed she thought, as already possessing him. On his part there was being born in his heart a great joy: that of a new and first love. Heretofore he and Con-

stance had known all things in common, and now suddenly he was satiate of her. But Katherine, he had thought, was so young and bright and beautiful; a child that had lived within the cloister and had grown to maidenhood in sweet innocence. 'Twas like finding in some tropic clime, embowered and shaded by thick, waxy leaves, a glorious, ripe pomegranate, which he would grasp and drink from its rich, red pulp, a portion that would cool and 'suage a burning thirst; while Constance, by the side of Katherine, was like a russet apple, into whose heart the worm of worldly knowledge had eaten its surfeit and taken all sweetness away, and the poor thing hung low, all dried and spiritless upon a broken bough to the convenience of any passing hand. "Nay, nay; give me only the rich, ripe pomegranate; my Katherine, Kate! Kate!" and blinded thus by the fever of desire to possess only his sweet Kate, he swung wide the door of Constance's room and passed to the bedside and leant over and kissed her.

She flushed red as she met his eyes—now cold and unimpassioned—looking into the very depths of her own. He saw the sudden scarlet that mantled her face, and knew—knew she loved him. And his heart went out to her, for he was attached to the russet thing, an attachment heretofore unnamed, but now—now suddenly christened with that parsimonious appellation—pity;

the object of which is never satisfied. But he had naught else to give, for Katherine had suddenly impoverished him.

"'Tis generous of thee, Cedric, to break from thy gay company; what are they engaged in?"

"Various,—some at cards, others at music——"

"And what was thy pastime that thou couldst sever thyself so agreeably?"

"I was listening to Bettie, and she on a sudden remarked of thy indisposition. I straightway came to note thy ailing. I have talked not with thee in private since thy arrival, and there is much news. Hast seen her, Constance, to talk with her?"

"Whom meanest thou? There are many 'hers' in the house!"

"The beauty that flew to me over seas, of course; whom else could I mean?"

"Oh! oh! to be sure; the maid from Quebec. Aye, I talked with her some. Thou sayest she is Sir John Penwick's daughter?"

"Aye, and she's a glorious beauty, eh, Constance?"

"But how camest thou by her?"

Cedric reached to that nearest his heart and drew forth Sir John's letter and gave it opened into Constance's hand. She read it with blazing eyes and great eagerness; for 'twas a bundle of weapons she was examining and would take therefrom her choice. She flashed forth queries

as to the probability of this or that with a semblance of interest that disarmed Cedric and made him wonder if this woman loved to such an extent, she could fling aside her own interests and submerge all jealousy, all self-love into the purest of all sacrifices, abnegation?

"What! no estates? That looks ill, for at one time Sir John was affluent, for Aunt Hettie has told me of him many a time."

"But he lost it all, as I've heard ofttime from father; he has spoken not infrequent of Sir John's high living; he had great demesne, a great heart and great temper; and 'tis the last named that has fallen clear and uncumbered to his daughter; and the heart will be found by careful probing, no doubt; and the demesne she will have when she condescends to take me as spouse."

"Thou, thou espouse her?" and Constance feigned surprise, as if 'twere a new thing to her, when in reality she had suffered agony from its repetition.

"Aye, and why not, pray? Am I not of ripe years and know my mind?"

"And why so?—because thou shouldst wed one of high degree and fortune and worldly wisdom."

"Nay, thou art wrong. 'Tis enough that she is of noble blood from father and mother; and I have fortune for us both; and worldly wisdom—

bah! Constance, dost thou expect her to know all the intrigues of court, when she is but lightly past fifteen?"

"Fifteen?—Now by heaven, Cedric, thou wouldst not lie to me?"

"Nay, Con, I would not—I have no object in this case, 'tis a truth."

"Fifteen, and indeed she is well-formed for such youth!"

"And what a beautiful and innocent face she has, too?"

"Beauteous, admitted; but innocent of what?"

"Innocent of all we know; she knows naught of this great world. Janet keeps all evil from her. We cannot conceive of such innocence in any one. The child has eaten the simplest things all her life; milk and gruel and beef-whey; 'tis no great wonder she is so pink and strong; Janet says in hand-to-hand battle in their convent chamber, the child hath thrown her oft in fair wit of strength;—such rough sport was not indulged in openly and Janet taught her thrusts and flings to broaden her chest and strengthen hip and back; she is stout and strong, and yet she makes one think of a beautiful flower until she falls in anger; then she shows a stout temper as well, and is wilful to all save Janet, who governs her by some strange method I ne'er saw before; for 'tis odd to see servant lead mistress. But, 'twas an awful thing happened me; I

knew not, or had forgotten rather, the arrival of the babe Sir John speaks of. As thou knowest, I came home unexpectedly, and I found the letter here. It had arrived some time before, and I read it hastily, told Wasson my duty and passed the letter to a convenient pocket, and thence until the night of the *masque* forgot all about the arrival of the infant. I was masqued, mad and raving at Christopher for not mending my bag-pipe, and I rushed swearing after him and Mistress Penwick heard my oaths, my broad Scotch ones thou knowest I love to use when in anger. She hates me for it, and I can do naught to win the confidence due me as her rightful guardian. So I have settled upon an immediate espousal——"

"Immediate? Thou marry a child,—'tis unseemly——"

"Nay, 'tis not unseemly; 'tis the most proper thing to do. Janet says so, too, and will urge her to accept me as soon as I wish to wed—which shall be at the earliest moment."

"Janet, indeed! What right has a servant to forward the doings of master and mistress? Thou hadst best wait and have her Grace of Ellswold present her at Court and give the child at least one season in London to improve her convent ways."

"Nay, Constance, if she were to grow one whit more beautiful, 'twould kill me dead."

"I am afraid thou art easily slain; indeed, I never knew beauty was so murderous before. Thou art surely beside thyself; she here alone in this great castle without a mother's love to guide! No one to whom she can tell her troubles! How must the poor child feel to be forced into a marriage she most like—hates;"—and her ladyship's voice took on such a tone of pity one would think she was about to break into tears,—"'tis a barbarous act for thee to talk of marriage so soon to a helpless being."

"There is nothing helpless about Kate, she can take her own part. She hath wit and temper for a half dozen."

"But thou wilt acknowledge if she will have *her* way she must leave the castle; for thou art bent upon *thy* way—thou wilt not listen to reason; so, see to it, and wed her straightway if—if thou canst." He was about to answer her with an oath, when suddenly Katherine stood in the half-open door smiling over the top of a great bunch of roses. On Constance' face was a look of triumph, as she noted Cedric's confusion; but Katherine's words put Cedric at ease.

"I was told thou wert ill and that Lord Cedric was uneasy and had come to thee; and I reproached myself for not coming earlier to see if thou wert in need of aught." She placed the vase of roses on a table close. Constance thanked her and took the tapering fingers and hugged

them between her own. Katherine looked down upon her thin, arrogant lips; and as there always comes to the innocent—when dealing with those of other mould—a warning, a feeling of repulsion, took possession of her and she withdrew her hand, and, in a moment, her presence.

"'Tis a vision of loveliness more refreshing than the nosegay she brought, thinkest thou not so, Constance?"

"Thou dost see with lover's eyes. How soon wilt thou espouse her; thy house is somewhat taken up by company, who are to remain for the summer, and how wilt thou get through the irksomeness of grand ceremonies without great preparation, for much will be expected of thy wealth and rank?"

"Damme, I'll have no pranks and ceremonies and entertainments; I have not time. I must wed her at once. Canst thou not see, under the circumstances, scandal-mongers will make eyes and prate of wrong for me thus to have a young maid here alone?" Now indeed this thought had not occurred to Constance in just this way; but now it struck her with a mighty force, and she shot at him a piercing glance through the half-closed imperious eyes.

"I had thought of it, but determined mine should not be the first breath to breathe forth scandal, even in private converse with thee;

'twas an awful thing for her to come here knowing of thy youth."

"But she did not know, as that letter and thou thyself can testify."

"But the world—the Court where thou wilt go to hold sway—they know not the circumstances."

"Now, by God, Constance, one would think thou wert an alien to King Charles' Court. If Charles knew I had here this maid and had not yet taken her to wife—why—why, he would take her away himself and laugh me to scorn for my slothfulness. But all London knows by now, as I have sent a message to my solicitors."

"But if she be set upon not marrying thee. What wilt thou do?" Lord Cedric hung his head, as if in profound meditation; then, without raising it, but remaining in a hopeless attitude, said:

"I will guard her from all evil. I will stand between her and harm and wait. And thou must help me, Constance. Wilt thou persuade her?"

"Have I not always taken thy part, even—when thou wert in the wrong?"

When Cedric left Lady Constance, he sought Janet and poured into her willing ears his woes. He feared lest some gallant should win his Kate's love, and Janet must tell him of some way to win it for himself.

Janet now loved Lord Cedric as if he were already Katherine's lord; and she, knowing 'twould

be one of the best matches in all England, vowed 'twas best for them to marry at once; beside, Kate, being wilful and having a tendency for men of foreign birth, with nothing in their favour but a small share of good looks and some musical ability, might see fit to plant her affections with such, and 'twas plain mischance would kill Cedric outright, for he was passionate to self-destruction; so when he said: "'Twould be instant death to me, Janet. What wouldst thou advise me to do—thou dost so fully understand her?" she answered him:

"'Tis somewhat the way with maidens to sigh for that not easily attained, and it might serve thee to put forth an indifferent air and incline thy attentions toward another and act a mighty cold lord and coddle not her desires."

"That would take so long a time; I cannot wait. I will speak to her once more, then I will be cold and indifferent as thou sayest. When shall I have an opportunity to speak with her?"

"How soon dost expect the chests with my lady's raiment, my lord?"

"On the morrow they should be here."

"'Tis then she will think of thy goodness, and I will put in a word for thee, and perchance thou wilt come to see if all things came, and 'twill give thee opportunity to speak of other things. She is wanting many things for the Chapel; she wishes to reopen it; and 'tis in matters of re-

ligion thy hot tempers will clash, for Mistress Penwick is a Roman Catholic, and thou art of the English Church."

"Thou art a wise Janet! I will turn the people, and they shall become Catholics."

"Nay, if thou dost undertake it, thy people will rise in arms against thee."

"So be it, let her have her way. I'll bother her not in her simple ideas of religion."

"Not so simple, my lord. Thou hast not seen the teachings of nine years take root and spread and grow as I have. Dost think she would allow thy Chaplain to bind thee to her? Nay, she will be wed by none but a priest. But she is kindly intentioned and feels sorry for thy poor Chaplain, who hath so hard a time to keep his flock together. I look any day for her to carry in a cross and hang it behind his pulpit, then—then he will faint away from fright of her."

"Nay, Janet, he will fall down and worship it, and—her."

CHAPTER VII

THE BRANTLE

Mistress Penwick sat in her chamber, trying to calm herself to reason; for the chest had come from London-town laden with splendid raiment; all had been unpacked and examined, and 'twas enough to cure all grievances, the very sight of such adornings; but her ladyship was disappointed that there were no stays. Janet for the time was distraught and said:

"I would that had been sent that would mend thy untowardness and bring thy temper to a comelier mould. 'Tis past time for thee to clothe thyself in that in which thy noble lord hath seen fit to purchase for thee; I heard some moments since the arrival of the hunters and it's time—" There was a sounding rap and 'twas his Lordship's lackey begging the admittance of his master. Janet bade Lord Cedric enter. He came forth in riding-coat and field boots and rattling spurs. Mistress Penwick vouchsafed a nod of recognition and turned her eyes away. The hot blood mounted Cedric's face and at a look at Janet understood all was not well; he essayed to speak with coolness:

"Art not happy with the contents of thy chest, Kate?"

"'Tis more than one could expect, but—sadly it lacked that I wished for most—a thing that marks one as lady and not child in grown-up people's clothes."

"And what might that be, Kate?" for indeed he had forgotten about her order that stays be sent.

"Simple, modest, commonplace stays, my lord," and she said it slowly and with a mighty air.

"Nay, nay—stays they did forget?" and he stamped his foot in seeming wrath and broke forth:—"I'll thrash that damned lackey blue for so forgetting!" and he turned as if to quit the room, but Mistress Penwick ran to stay his hurry.

"Nay, thou wilt not hurt him, 'twas not his fault, 'twas not by his hand the order was writ." And Cedric feigned further show of temper, and Katherine's tapering fingers ventured upon either lapel of his lordship's velvet coat, and he turned red and white and could hardly contain himself with delight. Janet, fearing a confusion of her master's words, put forth her arms and drew away Katherine's hands and said, softly:

"His Lordship will not thrash the lad, if thou wilt don thy most beautiful frock and forget the stays."

"That will I, if 'tis his desire; and —" she looked up into his Lordship's face with a look that was almost tender—"thou wilt say no word to the boy?" His voice was soft and pleading as he answered:

"Anything thou wouldst ask of me thus, thou couldst have it without the asking."

"Then, my lord, when there is aught I would have, I may take it without thy spoken yea?"

"Nay, not so; that would be highway robbery; for thou wouldst take from me the dearest thing that has yet happened to me; 'tis thy sweet pleading for that 'tis already thine."

"'Tis a generous thing for thee to say, but if I might have perfect freedom to do all things as I desire ——"

"And what are the 'all things' that thou wouldst desire?"

"I should like to have many changes made in the Chapel, and bring one who is well able to play on the great organ. And 'twould be a wondrous good thing to bring from the village of Crandlemar youths for the training of a choir, such as I have heard are of much repute among the poor lads for strength and sweetness of voice; and after all things are made ready, have the Chapel opened again with pomp of priest and solemn ceremony."

"If such are thy desires, I will put forward the work at once." Now indeed Katherine for-

got the sad lack of stays and for the moment forgot all else save that the handsome Cedric stood before her flushed and eager to gratify her every whim. He, one of the richest noblemen in Great Britain, whom she could have for a look; the stretching out of the hand. And she quite well knew that he was ready at the first opportunity to renew the subject of marriage, and for this very thing she turned from him thinking that some time she would consider his proposal. So again he went from her presence with a throbbing in his breast that was half-hope, half-despair and knew not what to do.

'Twas the last ball at Crandlemar Castle, for the hunting season was over. A goodly company gathered from neighbouring shires, and Mistress Penwick was the mark of all eyes in a sweeping robe of fawn that shimmered somewhat of its brocadings of blue and pink and 'broiderings of silver. She had decorously plaited a flounce of old and rare lace and brought it close about her shoulders and twined her mother's string of pearls about her white throat, the longer strands reaching below her waistband and caught low again upon the shoulder with a knot of fresh spring violets. Cedric stood apart with his kinsman, his Grace of Ellswold, who enjoyed the freedom of speech of all Charles' Court; indeed it appeared that not only looseness of tongue but morals also held sway in the most re-

mote as well as the best known portions of the kingdom. And at his Grace's first sight of Katherine he uttered an oath and some other expression that savoured of common hackney; for Cedric had been telling him of the soothsayer's words.

"The soothsayer spoke false and I'll wager thee the East Forest thou hast coveted against thy Welsh demesne. I tell thee, Cedric, a jewel hast thou found. Never have I seen her equal. And that is John Penwick's daughter!" and he took a great pinch of snuff and looked at Cedric. "She will make thee a fine wife,—but who is the man that dangles after her now? Indeed, I would say thou hadst better watch out for him. I do not like the look in his eyes; he is——"

"Egad, uncle! I would as soon think of being jealous of—of thee. He is Constance' cousin from Russia, and as she is staying here for some time, at her request I asked him also. Bah! I could never imagine him as a rival!"

"Well, so be it; but how about the wager of the East Forest?"

"Thou art on the winning side. So thou couldst not wager without an opponent, and 'twill be futile to find one, lest thou dost charge upon some landless bumpkin."

"And how soon wilt thou espouse her?"

"At the first moment of her consent——"

"Consent 'tis thou art waiting for? Thou

hadst better keep her close; for if his Majesty gains inkling of such fresh, young beauty and finds her out of bans, 'twill go hard with thee to sword thy way to a lady in waiting or—perhaps——"

"'Sdeath, by God! I had not thought of that! 'Twould be too bold and out of place, she being under my guardianship, to press her to espousal without fair consent;—but I know best; 'twould be for her own safety, is it not so, uncle?"

"If she knows naught of the frailties of all mankind and the Court in particular, I should say as thou art her rightful guardian and the suitor chosen of her father, and 'twas thy wish for her immediate espousal, 'twould best serve thee to use all manner of means to gain her consent, and if this prove abortive, I would abduct the maid and have thy Chaplain ready to marry thee to her; and after he pronounces thee man and wife, what can she do but love thee straightway for thy strong handling; 'tis the way of women. I would marry such a beauty in haste, ere another takes the vantage."

Lord Cedric chose Mistress Penwick for the brantle and led her forth. They moved with such majestic grace, they attracted all eyes. It seemed Cedric could not contain himself for love of Kate, and he vowed to gain her ear this very night and know for a certainty if she would ever marry with him.

It pleased Mistress Penwick to dance with Cedric, for she was more at ease with him than any other, and she was hardly pleased when he bade her rest and took her to another room, where they were quite alone. But she would not sit down, and stood fanning and smiling up into his face, saying half pettishly:

"Thou art soon tired; the brantle has just begun."

"Kate, hast thou patience?"

"Aye, but 'tis of dwarfish mould."

"Kate, dost love any human being?"

"Aye, 'tis a poor thing that loves not."

"Dost love me, Kate?"

"As a father or brother and as one should love her father's best friend."

"Then—give me a—kiss as thou wouldst give thy brother." The hot blood suffused her face. At sight of it, Cedric's heart leapt with a mighty gladness.

"Not having had a brother, I know not how to give that thou askest;—and 'tis unseemly of thee to ask for that that makes one blush for very shame to be questioned of."

"Blushes are not always for shame—'tis for love, sometimes. Kate, 'tis time I knew thy heart, for thou knowest I am about to die for love of thee. Dost not understand that thy father wished thee to marry at an early age and

to marry the son of his bosom friend to whom he gave his daughter's keeping?"

"Nay, he said naught of my marriage with thee, as he knew not thou wert in existence."

"Aye, of a truth he hath done so; it is here next my heart," and he drew forth Sir John's letter. "Wilt read but the lines I show thee; for there are secrets belonging to thy father and me alone?" He marked the lines with his jewelled finger, his love locks falling against her cheek as she read: "My last wish and the one of greatest import to my child is that thou find for her a spouse of rank and fortune. 'Tis my desire she marry early to such an one.—Ah! Cedric, if thou had hadst a son, their union would have been our delight——"

"Ah! ah!" and Katherine's eyes grew wide. "Thou hast said naught of this—as it appears here before me now; and it might have been too late."

"Too late! What meanest thou?"

"The noble—nay, now I cannot tell thee, for 'tis a secret but half mine."

"My God! who dares have secrets with thee save thy nurse and guardian; whose damned heart hath played the lover to thee?" His hand fell upon his sword and he drew it half way. "What guest hath so dishonoured name as to make profit of that I have already made known as my espoused? Tell me, Kate!" See-

ing her frightened eyes, that were justly so, he pushed back the jewelled hilt and threw his arm about her and drew her close, so close she was well-nigh crushed by his warm and passionate embrace and choked by pulverulent civet as her face was pressed against the folds of his steen-kirk. She felt the tumultuous beating of his heart, and 'twas a great, new feeling came to her and she trembled and swayed, and loved and hated both, in one brief moment and drew from him and looked with angry eyes. "Kate, Kate, what saidst the false lover; tell me every word. Did he ask thee for espousal?" Now Mistress Penwick faltered and flushed, for she dare not tell him who her suitor was and thought if she told him well what was said, he would not press her for name, and 'twas meet she should tell him truthfully. She feared his hot temper not a little, for she had heard that one time he locked Lady Constance in the tower for two whole days for telling him a falsehood.

"Aye, he asked me to espouse him."

"And what didst thou say?"

"I said him nay, 'twas too soon to wed, 'twould be wiser to speak a year hence."

"And what answer did he make thee?"

"He said the king's sister, Princess Mary, when but ten married William, Prince of Orange, and ——"

"And what?" said Cedric, leaning forward

his hand upon his sword, a curse between his white teeth and a line of light from between his half-closed lids like the flashing of a two-edged sword. "What—'sdeath?" And Kate trembled forth—

"And fifteen was none too soon to wed."

"And did he say naught else appertaining thereto?"

"Nay, I know naught else he could say!" and the innocence of her inquiring face proved his evil imagining a perjury. He caught his breath in a flutter of sheer heart's-ease.

"Now who is this swain who hath taken advantage of my invitation and come up from among the rustics yonder to make love to thee? I will run him through the first time I meet his insolence. Who is he, Kate; what's his name?" She vouchsafing no answer, aroused his suspicion.

"'Sdeath! what ails thy tongue? Haste thee, what is his name?" and he glared at her, furiously, 'til she was well nigh cold with fright.

"Sooth, thou art strong with temper for the very meagre cause a maiden will not bewray a poor man's name."

"Poor, indeed, when such as thou bestoweth upon him the priceless gift of thy heart as a locker for his secrets; by God! give his name, quick, ere I slay a dozen for one paltry fool that would rob me!" She read aright the steely light 'neath his half-closed lids and was dis-

traught, for she dared not give him the name of one of his guests; for the noble Russian Adrian Cantemir had pressed his suit and was upheld by Lady Constance, who told him of Katherine's vast demesne, knowing well he could not marry one without estates, as his were in great depletion. And the noble Cantemir had well nigh won her heart by his voice and music, and now that he was in danger of Lord Cedric's anger, he became an object of commiseration, and not for her life would she give his name to this raging man with murder in his heart.

"Nay, nay, my lord; give me grace. I have told thee truly all else, and now I beg ——"

"Dost thou say thou wilt not give his name? Then, by God, I will cut my way to his black heart!" He drew his sword and strode forth to slash the curtain that barred his way, and Katherine caught his upstretched arm and fell upon her knees, bursting into tears. At sight of tears and touch of fingers he dropped his sword and raised her quickly, saying:

"Nay, nay, not tears. Dry them, Sweet, they wring my heart to greater pain than all thy secrets, and for this one thou holdest I will take thy shoulder-knot instead." She looked up surprised at the sudden surcease of storm, and seeing his handsome face becalmed, she wondered at the magic that had caused it, and her heart smote her for withholding aught from one that

loved her so. She hastily drew from her shoulder the knot of violets that were still humid with freshness; and as she drew the fastenings the lace fell from her shoulder, disclosing her too-low cut bodice, and Cedric's quick eye saw why the screen of lace was used, and with trembling fingers caught up the lace and drew from his steenkirk a rare jewel and pinned it safe as deftly as her maid. He touched her hand with his warm red lips, saying in a voice resonant as music: "God bless thee, Kate, for thy sweet modesty!" He thought if the modish beauties in yonder rooms could boast of such perfect charm, 'twould not be hid by a fall of lace and a shoulder knot of violets. And he pressed the nosegay to his heart and left them there, folded within her father's letter. A calmness settled upon him, such as had not come to him heretofore, and trembling with happiness he led Katherine forth in the brantle; she feeling quite like an heroine for being able to hold her secret from this passionate man.

For all the convent had environed Mistress Penwick with sacred influences, and she had absorbed its most potent authority, religion, yet even that was not efficacious to the annihilating that 'twas born within; and one can but excuse the caprice and wantonness of a coquette, when 'tis an inheritance. She adhered pertinaciously to the requirements of a lady of title, and loved

opulence and luxury and admiration. She foresaw—young as she was and reared as she had been with all simpleness—an opportunity, being a noblewoman and the ward of a wealthy titled gentleman, to become a favourite at Court. This idea, however, was not altogether original; for Lady Constance had given her a graphic description of her presentation, and the requirements due to all ladies of note. And while Katherine fully intended to carry out her father's wishes for an early and noble marriage; yet she felt there was no haste; she was sure it would be his desire for her to enjoy one of those seasons at Court she had heard so much converse of. 'Tis not much wonder, having been so short a time in the great world and having won the hearts of two noblemen, she should wish for fresh fields to conquer. But now was not the time for a trip to London, for spring was upon them and there was much to look after in Crandlemar. His Lordship had sadly neglected his duties in keeping up the village and looking after the poor. The church must be built up. It had not occurred to her that there were other religions beside the Catholic; and when Lord Cedric's chaplain made known to her the difficulties of arranging Catholic orders in a Protestant Church, she could not understand. Janet explained to her what she would be compelled to surmount to bring her religion to be the accepted one in Crandlemar. Again her

mind was turned to Count Adrian, and she thought 'twould be well to wed with one of her own faith, and he was as warm a Catholic as herself. Cedric was a Protestant and a very poor one, indeed it seemed he had no religion. And yet he had told her that he petitioned not to God for aught; but 'twas his diurnal duty to thank Him for His benevolence and chastening; ever deeming chastisement the surety of his alien thought or action, and he speedily mended his ways or made an effort to; but what great sin he had committed that her love should not be given him was more than he could tell, and he should keep on trying to find out what his faults were, that he might receive that he wished for most. He wrangled not of religion, but ever kept the divine spark in his own heart alive, if not fanned to flame. Indeed so indifferent was his Lordship to the great questions of the times, he thought not of the ancient monastery in the depths of the vast forest upon his estate, where still resided recluses. 'Twas seldom he thought of these simple monks. They lived in seeming quiet, enjoying the freehold of their castle. But there was a storm brewing, and in its midst his Lordship was to be severely reminded of their presence.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ANCIENT MONASTERY

Lord Cedric's guests all departed after the Saxon dance, save their Graces of Ellswold, Lady Constance, Lady Bettie Payne and Count Cantemir. And with their exit spring seemed to burst forth in sward, bourgeon and bud, and the clinging tendrils upon the castle walls grew heavy and pink with their greedy absorption of carbon dioxide from the warm atmosphere. It seemed the unfolding of nature brought ten times more pain and uneasiness and mad love to Lord Cedric's heart. He had not yet learned who had been talking to Katherine of love. Janet had mentioned Adrian Cantemir; he had laughed at her. Constance had pointed to Lord Droylsden, a man of distinction and strong personality, whose estates joined his own. This appeared more plausible than the suit of Cantemir, and his Lordship watched Katherine when she was with these two and soon found, so he thought, it was for the latter she cared; indeed 'twas hard for him to follow the trend of her vacillating mind.

'Twas a glorious, warm spring morning. Mistress Penwick had ridden forth, attended by a

groom, to the village. She spent the entire morning in visiting the poor and sick and did not fail to note the dilapidated state of the cottages. She rode home flushed and eager with plans. She made known to Lord Cedric her desires to build up these poór cottages. Without question he doubled the amount of money she asked for, and paid her a large sum for immediate use among the poor. Katherine's heart was touched by his goodness to her, and spoke with more warmth than 'twas her wont and opined 'twould be a glorious afternoon for their ride in the forest! He had kept his eyes steadily from her; for 'twas his mood to play the disinterested and unconcerned; but at this innovation on her part he raised his eyes and spoke indifferently:

"Aye, if this weather continues, we will have roses in a fortnight."

"Speaking of roses reminds me; as I started forth this morning I saw a gardener upon the upper terrace trimming about some bushes of wonderful grace and beauty, and as I stepped among them I saw an ancient sundial; 'tis the first I've yet seen, and I made bold to ask him to plant some rare rose near it, that its leaves and blossoms might enfold its cold marble whiteness and warm it to greater beauty."

"And didst not thou suggest some choice?"

"Nay; just so 'twas healthy and prolific of bloom."

"Then as thou hast named a rose, I will name its kind!"

He smiled significantly, and the hot blood flushed his cheek. She came a step nearer and bent toward the table before him, her riding dress wrapping her perfect mould.

"One thing more I would ask thee; 'tis that I might have a bolder steed, the one thou gavest me is not near spiritful enough for one who wishes to ride well and gayly. I would have one that shakes his head and rattles his bit and stamps about uneasily." This was more than his Lordship could stand, and he broke forth in a mirthful laugh,—

"Thou shalt have the most buoyant palfrey can be found; he shall have a wicked black eye, and—an honest heart for his mistress." Cedric arose and bent gracefully to the fingers of Katherine as she held them out to him, then turned quickly to the fire and crushed a half-famished ember beneath his heel as he heard her cross the threshold. A moment after he strode out upon the upper terrace to the gardener, who stood with bared head as his Lordship gave command to plant by the dial a bridal rose.

The afternoon was glorious with the scent of a million shooting sprouts, and delicate with the perfume of violets. But the sunshine of the day was not to stay, for the party from the castle were scarce three miles within the confines of

the forest when the sun became overcast. But they rode on, however, taking delight in the fine air, and caring naught of cloud and threatening weather.

They soon came to intricate windings of the forest path, where two might not ride side by side, and as the Duke of Ellswold rode in behind his wife, he suddenly reeled and would have fallen had it not been for his groom. They all turned quickly save Mistress Penwick and Adrian, who had made the sharp turn and were galloping forward. Cedric bade a lackey ride with all speed to the castle for a coach; and as the anxious group waited, they wondered somewhat that Katherine and Cantèmir did not return. And Cedric's heart, while well-nigh taken up by his uncle's state, had still room for jealousy, and he grew hot with anger that for once he kept hid under the semblance of anxiety.

His Grace was tenderly lifted and taken to the conveyance that waited upon the broader road some distance away. The little caravan moved slowly, and before it reached the castle the wind began to blow furiously, bringing heavy showers.

The physician from Crandlemar had been summoned, and after a hurried examination gave them encouragement, saying that the duke had probably been riding too fast and his condition was not dangerous.

A courier had been despatched for his Grace's

physicians and all things done for his comfort; and Cedric for the time relieved from the anxiety of actual and impending danger concerning his kinsman, now felt the full force of his disappointment in Mistress Penwick's absence with Cantemir. He determined to ride forth in quest; and with a groom laden with all sorts of cloaks for her protection from the storm, that now raged furiously, started, feeling naught but the pain at his heart.

The Catholics and Protestants being at variance throughout the kingdom, and there were passing constantly under cover of forests and unfrequented highways groups of riotous men of both parties; for the life of him Cedric could not tell with which party he would rather his Katherine would come in contact—she unattended save by a modish fop.

After reaching the depths of the forest, 'twas no easy matter to find the exact paths they had traversed in the afternoon. The groom carried a lantern, but 'twas Lord Cedric's order not to light it. There were shooting lodges and forester's cabins, other abodes there were none save the old monastery, and to which of these places to go was left altogether to the toss of a penny. Beside, they were not sure of finding a shooting lodge, should they start for it; the night was so black and the paths so numerous and winding. Very often Cedric would stop and listen for the

tramp of horses' feet; but there was naught save the occasional cracking of twigs as some wild thing jumped from the roadside frightened, or the stir of the high wind in the giant trees. On they rode, and Cedric's heart was first sorry for his kinsman's ills, then—he would rant because Katherine had taken no notice of his importunities, and he swore under his breath in good, round Scotch oaths for his allowing her to go thus long without espousal; and again he looked at the matter dispassionately. She was a very young maid, without the protection of womankind of her own rank or an aged guardian. Then began to find fault, and on a sudden saw she loved admiration, and this sin became unpardonable and he became so wrought upon, he swore he would lock her in the tower until she consented to their espousal. Then he thought of Janet's words as he left her but a short time before: "I would vouch for her innocence with my life! Be not harsh with her, my lord!" and he ground his teeth in rage for his *espionage* of her. Then he thought of the king and what if she came under his eye,—"Ah, 'sdeath! 'twould make me mad!" and he laid spur to his horse and galloped on with hot curses in his throat.

How long or how far they had ridden 'twas impossible to tell, until suddenly they saw a light and at once Lord Cedric knew they were at the monastery. He halted instantly and dismounted.

Throwing the reins to the groom, he crept cautiously forward alone. To his astonishment he beheld a great number of horses about the enclosure, and he became still more cautious. "'Tis a Catholic *rendezvous*, by God!" said he.

He followed close to the wall, and was about to reach the window when the door was thrown wide open and a group of three stood upon the threshold. Two of them, Cedric saw, as the light from within fell upon their faces, were noted leaders of the Catholic party, the other was a monk, and 'twas he that was speaking. His voice was low and intense:

"If his Majesty has but one glimpse, he will pitch the Castlemaine overboard. This one is a religionist of no common order and will do much for the cause; and when she has done this thing, I shall do all I can to withdraw her from further communication with Charles. She shall not become one of his household, she is too good for that."

"'Twas rare luck that brought her to thine abode this afternoon, for our case was well-nigh hopeless, and soon it would have been too late, for once Sir John gets to this country—sh! Didst hear something stir hereabout?"

"Nay, 'twas naught but the wind; but when thou dost speak of Penwick, thou hadst better whisper."

"'Twas a pity we came not earlier according

to agreement, and we should have feasted our eyes upon the beauty."

"If thou hadst been one-half hour sooner, thou wouldst have seen her with the gay youth that will give her little peace 'til she doth say the word. I tell thee both, the Virgin Mary doth plead our cause, and no doubt 'twas through her agency the rain came upon the maid and drove her here. We offered special prayer to Holy Mary this morning. And the youth with her is also of the only religion. Mistress Penwick was greatly frightened of my Lord Cedric; for she would go forth in the heart of the storm, fearing a longer stay would bring uneasiness to the castle; so I gave her protection, a guide and a promise to receive her in a few days for the confessional and some religious direction; and I feel sure she will visit me within the week."

"'Tis an easy way to reach the king's heart; he doth so love a pretty face and fine parts; and we may be able to use the youth as well—eh?" They said a good-night and passed on to their steeds, mounting and riding away.

The monk returned to those within, and Cedric hurried away, anxious only to see Katherine once more,—to behold her once again with his own eyes and never, never again would he allow her to leave him. He would not be turned aside again from his purpose, she must come to his terms at once. Then he fretted and fumed, fear-

ing she had fallen under the stormy blast and had taken cold, and perhaps would have a fever. Then he grew hot and angry with her for riding so fast and beyond ear-shot of the company. And jealousy and all evil passions took possession of him.

Meanwhile Mistress Penwick had arrived at the castle, and was grieved when she heard of his Grace's condition, and sorry she had ridden ahead and was so late getting home.

Janet had hurried her to her chamber and disrobed her of wet garments, and bathed her in hot and cold baths, and was rubbing her with perfumed olive oil when Lord Cedric arrived.

He went to his uncle's bedside, and finding him resting, quietly hastened to his own apartments and sent to inquire of Mistress Penwick.

'Twas Janet's pleasure to answer her lord's inquiry in person, and after swathing her lady in fine flannels, she hastened to Lord Cedric's presence.

She found him standing in satin breeches, silk hose and buckled high-heeled shoes, and shirt of sheer white lawn and rare lace. He raised his drooping eyelids lazily, and looked at Janet as he lifted from the dressing-table before him rings—rare jewelled—and adjusted them on his white fingers. At his side was a valet, placing fresh sachets filled with civet within false pockets of the satin lining of his lord's waistcoat. The cold,

proud gleam from Cedric's dark orbs daunted not Janet. She courtesied with grave respect. There was that in her eyes, as she raised them, that called for the dismissal of the lackeys. As they passed beyond to the ante-chamber, she approached and spoke low in tones vibrant with suppressed emotion.

"My lord, as I am with thee in the chiefest thought of thine heart, I make bold to inform thee of a virulent action that is about to be made against thee; one flagrant of state intrigue and court duplicity."

"Damme, what now?" and his Lordship leaned heavily upon the table; the conversation at the monastery recurring to his mind with force as Janet proceeded.

"Not being able to contain my anxiety for Mistress Penwick, I wrapt myself and went forth in the storm to watch and listen for aught of her return. I passed some little distance within the confines of the forest, and was soon put upon my guard by the approaching tramp of horses' feet, and then, low-keyed voices, and in very truth I thought my lady was come; instead, three horsemen came within a few feet of my hiding and one said,—'We are even now hard by the Castle courtyard; 'tis possible the lackeys are waiting for the beauty who is perchance now started from the monastery. Didst ever see such beauty?' They halted and dismounted some distance from

the open road. Then one said,—'"Twill send his Majesty to madness when he sees before him such perfect mould, suing for his most gracious clemency toward our cause.' '"Tis a wonder my lord of Crandlemar does not take such beauty to wife,' said another. 'He may bid her farewell when once her fame reaches the Court; and 'twill be there in less than two days from this hour. Who will remain with the despatches while we find that rascal Christopher?' '"Twill best serve for one to go, and two guard the horses and bags. Thou hadst best go, Twinkham, thou art as subtle as the wind. Prod the villain Christopher to haste and enjoin upon him secrecy in the name of His Most Catholic Majesty, the Pope,—and do not thou be hindered by some scullion wench.' These things I heard, well-seasoned with imprecation against the king. I hastened from the *rendezvous* to my chamber and thought upon it, and—and there is naught can be done, unless thou wed Mistress Penwick straightway."

His Lordship fell into furious rage, and vowed he would sever Christopher's head from his rotting body with a cleaver, and honour him not with a thought of Tyburn Hill. He would burn yonder monastery and all within to ashes for the wind to carry away; and he would lock Katherine in the tower with his own hands; and he started toward the door, half-dressed as he was, and flung it wide open.

Her Grace of Ellswold stood upon the threshold with a warning finger raised.

"Thou hast a clamourous tongue, Cedric; the doctor hath enjoined silence, as holding for the moment the greatest good for his Grace."

"Now God forgive me! I was so wrought upon by foul communication I am well nigh distraught.—How is his Grace?"

"He is resting quietly; but I thought but now, as I heard thy voice—indistinctly, 'tis true,—his pulse did flutter extraly."

"Dear aunt, forgive; thou shalt not be thus annoyed again." He turned and strode up and down the room with bent head.

Janet watched him narrowly, wondering the while that any female, of whatsoever age, could withstand such fine mould, masculine grace and handsome features; such strong heart and hot blood. What maid beside her Lambkin would not be overjoyed to see him so mad with love of her? Who could resist kneeling before him and pleading, and watch his anger take flight; and feel his strong arms raise her and fold the maiden bosom to his heart, where 'twould throb and flutter as he held it close pressed—ah! 'twas not his anger that would kill, nay! nay! 'twas his tender passion.

"Janet, these are troublous times come upon us. They have come within these walls. We have traitors about us. That knave Christopher

shall die by the hand of the lowest scullion in the kitchen; for 'twould dishonour a better to mix with blood of swine. And thou wilt take thy mistress to the tower and there be bolted in, and 'twill be given out that her ladyship is ill and must needs have quiet——"

"If my lord values her health, 'twould be best to put her in a less windy chamber; the room is large and ill-heated for damp, spring days."

"Canst keep her safe where she is?"

"Aye, leave it to me, my lord."

"And thou shalt allow of no communication with those outside, save her Grace, and Angel thou canst rely upon—stay—thou mayest allow Constance to keep my lady company."

"Nay, my lord, I would refute the idea of safety in my Lady Constance."

"'Sdeath, what meanest thou; art thou also turned from serving me?"

"My lord, dost remember the night thou didst have dancers from London? Lady Constance sat late with Mistress Penwick, and at last complained of thirst and they two stole below stair and I followed, and as if by accident Lady Constance brought Mistress Katherine to the curtained archway, and she saw thee swaying in thy cups, and after a while my lady led mistress to her room while she hastened away to a room apart and donned the garb of one of the danc-

ing maids and came to thee as a gipsy, and she told thee false things concerning Mistress Penwick——"

"Is what thou sayest true, or is't thou art going mad?"

"'Tis true, my lord, as Mistress Penwick will tell thee if thou carest to ask."

"And Constance would do such an act?—" he spoke half aloud and incredulously,—"Nay, I cannot and do not believe it! Thou must have dreamt it, Janet,—and yet,—I did have like visions!—Thou art right; no one shall see thy mistress, no one, mind, but Angel and her Grace. 'Tis possible the king may send for me within a few days; and if so, I must go and leave thee to fight the battle alone. Art able, Janet?"

"Trust me, my lord."

"I can trust thee, good Janet. Look after her health; keep the windows open for fine air, but let her not go from her chamber. How thinkest thou she will take such imprisonment?"

"She will be angry, but so proud she will not petition for freedom; she may even brag 'tis to her liking to be so rid of thee."

"'Sdeath, Janet, thy tongue can cut! Dost believe she cares a jot for my anger?"

"Nay, not a jot, for 'tis the outcome of love, and 'tis my noble lady Innocence that is well aware that thy anger will fall to spray when she hath a notion to turn the tide."

"Nay, not again shall she win from me aught but cold looks 'til she hath a mind to espouse me;—and yet my mind was made up to marry, whether she consented or not; for the time has come when the one who waits will wait still, and the one who rushes on, will take the prize, whether by foul or fair means;—but nothing can be done to-night. In the meantime I will steel my heart to harsh deeds, and, by God! I will bear out my course. Janet, go now to thy mistress, and should I be despatched for before I see thee again, there will be no one here to defend her as thou canst do. Thou must not allow the servants to attend upon her; thou must do it all thyself—a sweet duty! so, 'tis left thee to defend with thy quick wit."

'Twas near noon the next day that Mistress Penwick arose and would prepare her for a ride to the village, when Janet told her of the imprisonment imposed upon her for safety. She at once became angry and accused her nurse of being a traitor and tool for Lord Cedric.

"Nay, Lambkin, in truth, there are dark deeds abroad. Those monastery celibates, who are well equipped to bandy with their equals, are mere braying bumpkins when they have to do with embroidered waistcoats and amorous hearts. They have surreptitiously corrupted one of Lord Cedric's lackeys and the fellow is condemned to die."

"Condemned to die! and who hath done the condemning, pray?"

"His master, to be sure!"

"Ah! if he should put forth the accomplishment of such a deed, 'twould be the act of a barbarian. What are the charges against him?"

"Just what it is I know not; but my lord deems the charge most grave and—he may be even now dead."

"Janet, thou dost so frighten me. Does the matter concern my lord's person,—is his life in danger?"

"Not his life but his love; 'tis for thy sake he does it."

"For my sake!—then it shall not be done; I will see to it. Let me go to Lord Cedric straightway."

"His orders would not permit it."

"For shame, Janet; to save a man's life? Let me go; I am not afraid of his anger."

"'Tis impossible; he would send me away if I disobeyed him."

"Then thou must bring him here, Janet."

"'Twill do no good to see him; he will not come. He is thoroughly out of all patience with thy perverseness,—thou wilt never find another such a noble lord and one 'twill love thee with such love;—and for a face and figure—well, thou art surely blind to masculine beauty;—and should his Grace go hence, my lord will be his Grace

of Ellswold, and second to none in the realm; he will become as much to the king as the Duke of Buckingham, and will far outshine Monmouth and Shaftesbury."

"Nay, Janet, he will ne'er become great when he doth so confuse justice with viciousness;—but, nurse, I would have thee haste. Tell my lord that I beg his presence, if for a moment only; he surely would not refuse so trifling a request."

"But it is not trifling, as he well knows thou art upon the keen edge of want before thou wilt so much as smile upon him." At the moment there struck upon Mistress Penwick's ears the tramp of horses' feet, and straightway she ran to the window and leant out and saw Cedric about to ride forth.

"My lord, my lord!" she cried, and dropped a rose to attract him. His horse sprung aside and trod upon it; but Cedric looked up and saw the anxious face embrazured by ivy-clad sill; and with involuntary courtesy he speedily uncovered and waited thus her pleasure.

"May I have a word with thee, my lord?"

"Indeed, Mistress, it doth rack me with pleasure to accord thee so slight a service," and he dismounted quickly and strode into the great hall and bounded up the oaken stairway. It seemed to Mistress Penwick, as she heard his rattling spurs, that 'twas a sound of strength,

and she felt a happy, exultant tremour, knowing her cause already won. But for once there was not wisdom in her conceit. She made a sweeping courtesy as he entered. He bent low before her, waiting her first words.

"My lord, wilt thou permit me to inquire somewhat of thy mercy?"

"Thou dost make me insolvent of such a quality when thy keen penetration doth not discover, without inquiry, its existence." She was not daunted by his severe answer, but flushed slightly at his imperturbance.

"Then, if thou dost acknowledge thyself so pampered, I beg thou wilt conjoin to justice its semblance and forgive thy poor servant the penalty of death."

"Ah! ah! and 'tis Christopher's cause thou art pleading. Happy Christopher!" he sighed deeply. "If the King would thus condemn me, Mistress Penwick wouldst thou thus care for me?"

"The query is of that so premature 'twould be impossible to frame a reply,—hence I beg to continue converse upon an affair thoroughly elaborated and arranged."

"'Twould grieve me to say at once 'nay'; for that would end at once for me these supreme moments in thy presence; however, I will repeat the adverb of negation with a rising inflection that thou mayst continue with amplification."

"Dost thou mean to discontinue converse with me?"

"Nay, I beg not."

"Then thou meanest thou wilt not forgive thy poor servant, and wilt impose such extreme penalty; and further importunities would be useless?"

"I forgive the dead all things."

"My lord, he is not already dead?" and she fell from him aghast.

"Nay, but soon will be."

Mistress Penwick saw no softening in Cedric's manner, and she became alarmed and threw some tenderness in her voice and spoke softly, that she might lead or manage her lord by gentleness and tact.

"My lord, do not look so cold and hard." She drew nearer and her voice became more pleading. "'Tis a little thing for thee to grant me this one desire. I beg with all my heart for thy servant's life."

"Nay, I have given order for his despatch before sunset."

"Nay, nay, my lord, I beg." She came close to him and laid one hand caressingly upon the silver fastenings of his coat and he turned white and trembled and caught her hand within his own and bent down and pressed his lips to her fingers. She saw her advantage and followed it close.

"Wilt grant me this one thing, my lord, and I will hold myself—ready to—hear thy suit renewed—if thou so will it?" His voice vibrant and low with passion he could hardly restrain, broke forth,—

"Kate, Kate, I could not call so base a life worthy of thy consideration, and I could not grant thee that 'twould sully thy sweet tongue to barter for."

"Thou art most unrelenting, my lord!" The maid was angry for having offered her lord the privilege of renewing his suit; which he didn't seem inclined to do; and finding her pleadings were of no avail, and being angry and annoyed, she broke into tears, knowing of a certainty she would now have her way, even though her dignity was lowered. Cedric could not stand and see her thus; he turned from her quickly and was about to leave her, when she called to him almost impatiently,—

"My lord, wilt grant his life until the morrow?" He hesitated, then turned and bowing low, murmured,

"Until the morrow, Kate," and left the chamber.

CHAPTER IX

SIR JULIAN POMPHREY

"Now time is something to have gained! Janet, thou must go to yonder monastery and bring a priest to shrive Christopher."

"And how didst thou know Christopher was shriveable?"

"'Tis unseemly of thee to make jest of divine ordinances."

"Nay, I would not jest but know where 'twas thou learnt of his religion?"

"All of the Catholic faith know one another by intuition; 'tis God-given."

"Then thou didst also know him to be a rascal?"

"Neither do I know it now. Wilt thou not find some way to bring a priest hither? Pray, Janet, do; for if I let it go past, 'twill bring me miserable thoughts and wicked dreams. Janet, thou didst once love me and hadst a fond way of anticipating my desires; but thou hast on a sudden forgotten thine whilom usages. Beshrew thee for falling away from thine old friends and taking up with new ones. Lord Cedric's nurse watches him from morn until

eve and deigns not to cajole him or win his desires from their natural bent."

"'Tis wisely said; for his desires are inclined in the right direction. 'Twas but last night when he was well-nigh distraught with thy absence with the Russian Jew that doth ogle thee, that Angel brought his riding-cloak and threw it over his shoulders as he tore up and down his chamber; and she said, lowly,—'Go, my lord, 'twill ease thy mind to ride,' and he flew to horse. She is ever helping him to thee."

"And now I would have thee to help me to my lord's good graces and my desires; but thou art evil bent."

"Nay, my precious Lambkin, if I could I would help thee this night to the nuptial altar; but as to helping thee to thy desires, 'twould be helping thy peace of mind and him to utter ruin; and such calamity would render thy young life incomplete; for without this noble lord thy perfectness will be unfinished."

"Cease carving epitaphs, Janet, and help me assist this poor unfortunate. How long will my lord be gone?"

"He has only gone to the village to meet the workmen who were to renovate the nurseries and ride home with Lady Constance, who rode away early this morning when thou were dreaming of Russia."

"Then I will write him my petition, and thou

shalt give it to Angel to give my lord, immediately upon his return." She sat down with parchment and quill and wrote rapidly; and as Janet noticed not, she wrote two letters instead of one. The first she folded evenly and put beneath a book, the other she gave to Janet, who took it and left the chamber to seek Angel. Mistress Penwick, thus left alone, wondered how she should convey her other letter to Count Adrian. She approached the window, and lo! upon the upper terrace paced her Grace of Ellswold and Cantemir. 'Twas not the first hour that day the latter had so paraded the sward, ever and anon casting glances toward Mistress Penwick's windows. Again he glanced up and saw her wave a white paper and immediately leave the window. He guessed at once 'twas something more than indisposition that held her to her room. Again she looked; they had turned from the window. She flung forth the paper and it floated down as Janet came into the room.

'Twas late that evening Katherine sat in *peignoir* and unbound hair, ready for retiring, when there came a soft rap and a pleading voice asking for admission. Now Janet was not one whit afraid of double dealing when she was present, and being proud of Mistress Penwick and not wishing it to appear that she was a prisoner, she opened the door and in came Lady Constance

smiling and shy, a hollow-hearted creature of the world. Now it so happened that Lady Constance had kept herself from Katherine for some little time, wishing not to be disturbed by the maid's beauty; as it usually stirred her to frenzy and she wanted perfect quiet for calm reasoning. It took some time to plan her campaign that was already full started, and she now came forth from her chamber refreshed, the course of her slothful blood hastened; her eyes gleamed with impatience for action; her whole being changed, rejuvenated, filled with a new life. She came also with a full knowledge of all that had taken place in the *interim* of her absence from Katherine. She came well prepared for a bout, and blushed not at the subterfuges and mean, paltry artifices, aye, a full battery of chicaneries that awaited her use, as she crossed the maid's chamber threshold. "'All is fair in love and war,'" she quoted—"'Tis an egregious platitude adopted alike by king and fool!"

"I could not sleep without first seeing thee and knowing thy condition. It must be more than hard for thee to keep thy chamber?" said Constance.

"Nay, thou art wrong; the convent doth inure one to quiet and solitude."

"Dost think thy ailments will allow thee to go abroad on the morrow?"

"I know not, I am at Janet's mercy and I can-

not leave my seclusion without her permission. I feel quite well, but Janet says I am ill."

"Oh! that I had a nurse to so fondle me; indeed, she has kept all looks of illness from thee; thy face is as clear as if thou hadst been fed on wild honey all thy days;—and such hair! Dost leave it thus for the night?"

"The tangles would never submit, should I so leave it."

"'Tis my delight to fuss with hair and thine is so beauteous—" she arose and went to Katherine and smoothed the amber threads—"See, when I turn it thus, 'tis like rare bronze, and when I place it to the light, 'tis a glorious amber. May I plait it for thee,—I should love so much to do it?"

"If 'twill give thee pleasure thou mayest assuredly plait it," replied Katherine. Janet now watched for a whispered word or some sign of intercourse; but her vigilance was of no avail, for Lady Constance deftly placed a tiny paper in Mistress Penwick's hair and plaited tightly over it.

"'Tis such a pleasure to fuss with hair—and such fine threads, too; indeed, I have half a mind to become a *peruquier*,—there, 'tis finished!"

"How is his Grace, Lady Constance?"

"He bids fair to pass a comfortable night,—'tis too bad his physicians cannot arrive before the day after the morrow. They have also sent

for Sir Julian Pomphrey—a favourite of the duke and an intimate and college fellow of Lord Cedric. Sir Julian is a most wonderful man. When but nine years of age, he entered Eton school, and having pursued his studies there with great success for one of such light years, he was sent to travel upon the continent, where he studied in Geneva for some time; thence he went to Florence, remaining there many months,—afterward visiting Rome and Geneva and other continental cities of note. He returned to England a scholar, a soldier, a gallant, a conqueror of female hearts,—in brief, he holds all the requirements of a charming cavalier of King Charles' Court. He has modish habits that so completely masque his strong will and determination that before one is aware they are caught and wound in the meshes of his duplicity. He is a literate, poet and musician."

"Thou dost indeed stir me to great interest, Lady Constance; he must be a wonderful man. It seems we seldom have so many great qualities in one human being. He must be quite along in years?"

"Nay, not at all! His very youthfulness is what makes him such a wonder. If I remember rightly, he is but two years senior of Cedric, and I will venture there is not ten pounds' difference in their weight. They are very much the same mould, and their voices blend as one, but Cedric

has the handsomer face. Sir Julian, however, has a countenance of no common order; 'tis like a rock of strength already well lined and marked by the passions that have swayed him to battle and death or—perchance a lover's intrigue. He is in great repute for his smile that is transcendent in its beauty, but one can never tell what note it rings, whether true or false; its condiment may be of malice, hate, reserve, flippancy, deception. And one looks on and fears to take part in his mirth, for the reason one knows not what lies beneath in Sir Julian's heart."

"Indeed, and he is to arrive soon?—Sir Julian Pomphrey—I like the name!"

"It is one of the best names in England. I shall be very glad to see him, and hope he will come soon. When he gets word his Grace is so ill, he will probably come as fast as the ship and post-horses can travel. He is at present a special emissary to France. He did write Cedric some time since that he was about to return to England, that his work there was nearly finished."

"He will doubtless be playing fine French airs, and have much gossip of the composers and will perchance bring music with him that will stir us to greater study of execution."

"It may be, and it mayhap so move thee; but I am foreign from the rudiments of counterpoint and technique and such lollipops of harmony."

"Then it must be wearisome to hear me prate

of the divine art, and much more to hear my poor drummings on the harpsichord, I am sorry ——"

"Nay, be not so. I am more content when thou art at practice than at all other time, save when I am with thee thus, alone." And there was a covert meaning in her flattery. "Now, my dear Katherine, if thou art thus beset on the morrow, I will engage to come at thy retiring hour and dress thy hair; 'twill give me such pleasure."

As Lady Constance retired from the chamber, Mistress Penwick stretched her lithe body and yawned and expressed a desire for the bed. Soon she was left alone, and she stole from her couch and knelt at the hearthstone and read the missive eagerly and flushed not a little at Count Cantemir's warm words of love that were a prelude to the weightier matters appertaining. She crept back noiselessly and lay pondering of many things. It seemed to her as if all earth breathed of love; that she was the nucleus around which all flowers and perfume and everything beautiful revolved. And now she was about to open a mystic shrine, into which she would step and see and know and feel with youth's ecstasy a strange development of essential existence. And after wondering and speculating upon the affairs of love, she entered into prayerful thought of Lord Cedric's servant, and soon fell into sound slumber.

CHAPTER X

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE BUTLERY

"'Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead.

"'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which come up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

"'Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely; thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks.

"'Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand buckles ——'"

"Nay, nay, Janet, thou must not idolize me thus, 'tis ——"

"Beshrew thy conceit. 'Tis Solomon I repeat. Thou were not thought of when 'twas writ."

Katherine raised upon her elbow and looked surprised at Janet, who knelt by the bed.

"Thy tongue is sharp, Janet, for a day yet in its swaddling hours."

"Aye, 'twill be whetted two-edged e'er the

day waxes old. 'To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for evil communication to be thrown from young maid's window, a time to look for answer to a pleading letter sent to a justly angered lord; a time when his Lordship deigns not to give answer; a time when a young lord to a tender parchment pregnant with importunities says: 'Damme, she would set one thief to shrive another;' a time when his Lordship slams with a bang the outside cover to a book *blasé* of many turned leaves."

"Dear, dear sweet Janet; where is Lord Cedric? And has he said nothing of Christopher?" The nurse averred that his Lordship had ridden forth early, without giving his destination, and had left no word concerning the servant.

"Perhaps my lord's better nature hath prevailed, and he will keep the poor fellow in durance yet for a time," said Katherine, hopefully.

"Nay, his decision is irrevocable. He is not dealing in hearts now, Lambkin."

There was no doubt in Mistress Penwick's mind but that his Lordship would kill, or cause to be killed, the condemned lackey, and Janet knowing 'twas his Lordship's temper and not his heart that vowed the death, dissembled and impressed upon her mistress that the deed was as good as done.

Katherine's wit was sharpened by the exigency, and she managed to use the window again as a post, only fearing—from Janet's anomaly of Solomon's words—that some one waited below to capture the flying missive. This issue was accomplished as the nurse was listening to the Duke of Ellswold's message; when, late in the morning, the duke after swallowing a stimulant declared he must have the more substantial refreshment of Mistress Penwick's beauteous countenance.

The duke was too ill to remain up long; and though Katherine was less than an hour from her chamber, the day was much shortened by the diversion. As night approached she became more and more anxious about Christopher. Indeed, it seemed to her as if the moments were hours after candle-light. And she moved restlessly about her chamber and listened and sighed for the return of his Lordship. Surely the silence was more pronounced than usual; it became om-

inous to her, and she spoke out quickly in a voice that was peevish:

"The castle is very quiet to-night. His Grace is not suffering again, I hope? Wilt see, Janet? I'm in a perfect fever of impatience!"

"Nay, he is very comfortable. Her Grace is with him. Lady Constance, Lady Bettie and the Russian are at cards."

"Will my lord arrive soon, dost think, Janet?"

"I know not. Why art thou so solicitous on a sudden of his outgoings and incomings?"

"I would make another effort to save Christopher, if I could but converse with my lord."

"And what wouldst thou give him in exchange for the fool's life?"

"Everything, Janet,—all that I have to give should be his."

"Then that includes thy heart, Lambkin?"

"Nay, dear nurse, my heart is already given."

"Of all the powers that be! And what knave hath attempted to steal that that thou wert born without?"

"'Tis unjust of thee to speak thus. I have a mind not to tell thee!"

"Thou wilt tell me straightway, for thou wilt turn all colours when I say Adrian Cantemir," and quickly Mistress Penwick turned her back, "I am aggrieved at thy folly. What hath he said to thee? Tell me every word, Lambkin."

"He hath said more than I could tell thee, Janet, in a whole hour."

"It is impossible! And what were all of these hour sayings,—love pratings?"

"If I told thee, thou wouldst then know as much as both of us, and there are but two in a marriage contract; so I will have to begin barring secrets from thee."

"And did he tell thee what marriage meant to two people knowing not their own minds?"

"He said 'twas a most perfect life. All was sunshine and flowers and great happiness. First of all, he will take me to Russia, as 'tis his pleasure to hasten home with me. Then we will visit the French and English courts, and we will see all the beauties of this life. I shall become known among the musicians and meet ——"

"And said he naught of home-life, and the extent of his riches?"

"Nay, we are to live at Court always, free and happy, consorting ever with kings and queens ——"

"Did his High-mightiness ever consider that court dignitaries consort not with a rogue who hath entrapt an angel for spouse?"

"I will not listen to thy rough tongue, Janet," and she straightway closed her ears with her tapering fingers and walked up and down as a spoilt child would do.

The prandium hour was past, and the evening

far spent when Mistress Penwick desired to retire.

"'Tis most likely his Lordship will not return to-night, Janet?"

"He has gone on a journey of some import, as Angel hath just said; so I could not say when to look for his return."

Janet had been asleep some time when she was aroused by some subtle thing that brought her upright and from thence to the floor and from the floor to the closet that connected her apartment with that of her mistress. The door was locked; this was an innovation that startled Janet to a keen alertness. She rattled the knob and knocked upon the panelling. Stooping, she saw the key was turned in the door. She hurried from the place to her own room and into the hall, and from the hall to a small corridor, and from thence to the grand corridor, where opened the door of her mistress' ante-chamber. In she flew, and tried the inner door. 'Twas fast locked, and the key gone. It seemed she sped on wings as she descended the oaken stairway in her trailing gown. She reached Lord Cedric's bed-chamber with trepidation and not a little daunted; for should his Lordship be within 'twas possible his anger would know no bounds; and while she loved his good hot temper, she feared it when so justly aroused. Within the ante-chamber was a steward and two or three

lackeys, all asleep; she passed them silently, and without hesitation opened the door. Lord Cedric sat before the table in riding boots and spurs, divested of coat and waistcoat; writing, and looked up surprised and amazed at one who dared to so enter his presence; but he read that in Janet's countenance that brooked not at delay.

"My lord, Mistress Penwick hath deserted her chamber, and I know not where to find her, nor can think of where she may be gone." Lord Cedric stood before her still and white as marble, his face glistened with the cold sweat of fear.

"By God, Janet, thy tale doth take from me all strength!" Even as he spoke he sunk down upon his chair. Janet brought from a stool hard by a posset-pot and pressed it to his lips. He drank gurglingly, as if his throat was paralyzed.

"Janet," he breathed forth, "call the lackeys." He had somewhat recovered, and stood upright while his valet buckled on his sword. He took from the table a polished dagger and placed it in his belt; he called for candles and bade the lackeys lead on. Janet was well-nigh distraught at this awful cloud of anger that was about to break forth in the thunder of his tongue and stroke of sword. The steward of the household was aroused, and keys were brought to unfasten Mistress Penwick's door, that they might ascertain if she had fled afar. Her hoods and hats

were all in place upon the shelves of the dressing-closet, but there was gone a white camelot cloak. The footman near the outer entrance said none had passed since Lord Cedric's arrival.

"But, my God! I have just arrived; who passed before?"

"Not one soul since nightfall, save the village doctor, your Lordship."

Lord Cedric had enjoined perfect silence, fearing lest some noise might disturb his Grace of Ellswold.

The lackeys bearing lighted tapers—behind them the young lord of the castle, with the attendant Janet—moved solemnly like a procession.

They passed thus from room to corridor, from hall to gallery, and through passages; examining secret exits and closets. They traversed the long banquet-hall and were upon the threshold of a carved and lofty doorway, when Janet espied upon the parquetry a cobweb bit of lace protruding from beneath the tapestry of a chair. Lord Cedric's keen eyes marked her movement as she essayed to reach it without his notice. He turned quickly and fierce upon her, knocking his sword with a loud noise upon the chair's carving.

"Give me thy treasure, Janet!" She gave it to him with something like a sob; for 'twas her mistress' handkerchief, and she feared mightily her lord's anger.

"Your Lordship! If it so turned out that she be holding some *rendezvous* with thy Russian guest——"

"Ah, 'sdeath!" he interrupted.

"I beg thou wilt forgive much, she being of such slender age and knowing not the great wrong of clandestine——"

"Ah! ah! she holdeth court here in the chief butlery."

The door before them had been thrown open by the lackeys. They stood upon either side for his Lordship to pass through. Beyond, framed in the dark embrasure of the archway, stood Mistress Penwick in gleaming white. Her hands behind her rested upon a table from which long leaves depended to the floor, upon either side, her camelot cloak was thrown carelessly upon the further end, its long fulness draping to the floor, and in the centre of the polished top of the table rested a tall, silver candlestick with lighted taper. Upon the hearthstone there shot up a cheerful blaze, for the night was damp and chilly, and the flickering light sent Mistress Penwick's hair first amber, then bronze. Her face was still and white, and her eyes flashed wide and boldly. Her heart beat high and her breath came fast and hard.

For a moment only his Lordship's glance fell upon her, then it swept the room from end to end, and from ceiling to parquetry. Then oc-

curred a strange thing to them all; for 'twas ever Cedric's way to swear and curse, using holy names and blasphemous phrases; and it startled Katherine more than all, as he spoke low and calmly, holding out his jewelled hand to her:

"Come, Mistress Penwick, I will escort thee to thy chamber; 'tis a childish trick of thine to seek bread and butter at such unseemly hours."

"But, my lord, I am not yet begun."

"Ah!—with one pair of shapely hands unused to spreading butter, it doth take long in preparation." The snowy whiteness of his Lordship's waist reflected upon his face, where now came and went its wonted colour, as doubt and certainty fought for supremacy. He stepped nearer and glanced behind her upon the table.

"Thou hast not even brought forth bread. I will aid thee," and he went to the cupboards that lined the room, and opened and looked within each large door, until he was satisfied of his search, and those about stood watching and trembling, fearing lest some one should be found in hiding.

"I find naught here of bread or butter, Mistress Penwick; we will have to seek elsewhere!"

"And thou wilt not have far to seek, my lord; my whey sits freshly made upon the cellaret in yonder closet adjoining; if thou wilt be so kind as to bring it hither, Janet will provide me with bread," and Katherine looked triumphant.

"I would first learn whom I follow. Who hath so cavalierly concocted it for thee at this late hour? Where is the person, my lady?"

"One who is in the habit of following thy orders; but at mine he hath made it; 'twas Tompkins." Her voice rung with so much of truth, his Lordship was satisfied and looked at her with a lighter heart; then, as she pointed toward the door—a mute command for him to bring the whey—he frowned and drew back and spoke,—

"Hiary will bring it thee, for 'tis said a hand put forth by an angry heart doth curdle that it toucheth and—I am of no mind to be either kind or courteous." At these words, the colour that had come into Katherine's face a moment before, left it.

As Hiary turned to do his lord's bidding, a door opened and Tompkins entered with a lighted candle and large basket. Seeing the unexpected, coughed to hide his confusion; indeed he knew not which way to turn, when his Lordship walked to his side and raised the cover of the basket and looked within.

"It appears that 'twas a feast thou wert preparing;—everything suitable for a full meal. Here is fowl and cheese and mutton tarsal and bread and ale,—Egad! we shall not want now, shall we, Mistress Penwick? Set the table, Tompkins!"

"Ah!" came in an asperate tone from the now

trembling and frightened maid. His Lordship heard it and saw her turn white and tremble. Slowly he walked to the hearthstone, eyeing her askance, then he swept his brow where the cold perspiration lay in beads;—then turned to her again with a world of love for her in his eyes and a great crushing self-pity; and the menials looked away from the abject misery they beheld in their lord's face; Tompkins fumbled nervously with his burden, daring not to look up; Janet leant forward, intent, pained, sorrowing, scanning the two countenances she loved best on earth. His Lordship stretched forth his arms and with a great sob that broke upon that one word "Kate," he took a step forward and essayed again to speak, but the words would not come. Then with a great effort he seemed to fling all tenderness from him and spoke most harshly,—

"Where hast thou hid thy lover, Mistress Penwick, tell me where he is!" She drew herself up quickly to her full height and smiled, for this was one thing and she had thought another, and the reality was better than her fancy. And she said, as she drew a long, relieved breath,—

"He is safe, my lord!"

"Nay, nay, by God! he is not nor ever will be again. He hath so dealt with me and my honour, even though I stand within mine own threshold 'twould be heinous to allow him to leave it with life in his accursed body. I tell thee now,

there is nothing of hell or heaven that can take thee from me. Dost hear—dost hear, maid?" He again wiped his brow and looked about him. "It does somewhat appear as if my brain were turning!—Janet—bring thy maid here to me! Janet made a step forward, but was checked by Katherine's warning look.

"Mistress Penwick, remove thyself from the table; Tompkins, set it, set it, set it quickly I say!" Tompkins put the basket upon the table and turned to a linen closet and brought therefrom a cloth and made as if to spread it upon a small table near him. His Lordship saw his move, and broke forth in angry tones,—

"The table of honour, there, there Tompkins!" As he shook his fingers toward it, his hand fell back upon the hilt of his sword.

"Nay, I forbid him to do it," said Katherine.

"By all the foul fiends! raise the leaves or I smite thee down," said Lord Cedric to the frightened Tompkins. And he drew and leaned forward his body well nigh to the floor. His eyes were wild and bloodshot. As Tompkins raised the leaves Mistress Penwick threw herself between his Lordship and the table. With one bound Cedric swayed aside and like one frenzied, gazed beneath the table, and there looked out to him the white face of Christopher.

His Lordship broke forth into such a wild laugh, even the affrighted and condemned serv-

ant crept from his hiding and looked on amazed. Finally, when his laughing had well-nigh ceased, his Lordship drew from his belt the dagger and threw it across the room at Hiary, saying,—

"There; stick him as thou wouldst a wild boar —no probing, mind; but death!"

"Nay, nay, my lord! my lord!" broke from Mistress Penwick, and Janet ran to her crying,—

"My lord, not so harsh a deed before my lady's eyes!"

"Ah! ah! and she hath carved my heart to pieces! Commit thy office, Hiary!" The lithe lackey sprang upon Christopher and drove the knife, it appeared, to the hilt, and with a gurgling cry the lad fell.

Mistress Penwick looked on wild-eyed with terror. His Lordship came near and leant close to her ear and said,—

"Thou hast turned thy charms to ill account, thou stirrest me to evil deeds. Didst thy love help thee to this *rendezvous*, and was he satisfied to leave thee when he heard my sword flap upon the chair without to fight thy battles alone, or did he sate his desire on thy innocent face and fled aforetime to prepare for a greater sating? Now by God, none shall wrest thee from me again. Arouse the chaplain! Come, Mistress, thou shalt have a husband who loves thee within the hour, and the morrow's sun will look in on a sweet young wife with a light heart."

He laid hold on her without violence, she drew from him even more frightened than heretofore.

"Come, we will wed straightway and before dawn thou wilt have forgotten my haste and stout urging," and he started forth drawing her with him by force. She struggled wildly and cried,—

"Nay, nay; I'll not marry with one who would strike down and kill the unfortunate; nay, nay!" and she screamed again and again.

From the doorway came a voice of thunder, its power seemed to crush out all other presence. 'Twas but one word, but it rung and vibrated and stirred each breast with its vehemence.

"Cedric!"

His Lordship let go the maid and turned and sprang to the open arms of him who called. The awful tension of his nerves relaxed and he uttered in rapid succession,—

"Julian, Julian, Julian!" and fell to sobbing, his form trembling with his emotion.

"Hath gore of *canaille* sapped thy noble blood and impregnated in thy veins vile clots to turn thee purple with choler?" and he pushed Cedric from him. "What doeth this *couchant* dog here?" He turned and stirred the prostrate form of Christopher. "'Tis ill to so fall upon the seething caldron of thy passion, the noxious fumes of which penetrate yonder to our kins-

man's couch of suffering—and at the same time thou dost pound to pomace the heart of yonder Junoesque figure."

"Julian, thy tongue hath an awful strength, it doth goad me to something like reason. I was indeed rough, but I was looking after mine own. The maiden there is plighted to me for espousal and I was taking her to the chaplain."

"It may be thou dost take her rightfully; but if 'twere me I would bring her to it by soft and gentle words, not by handling. It doth take away the sweetness."

"Indeed, Julian, I have used all things worth using to gain her. I have played all parts and have asked and sued and prayed, aye, begged. I have honoured and loved and pampered her every whim; I have coerced and threatened,—all to no avail; indeed, I have gone mad for very effort to please."

"Hast thou tried cold indifference and haughtiness? It oft haps that a maid is won by a lofty and arrogant mien." Sir Julian Pomphrey glanced askance at Mistress Penwick, who lay with her face buried upon Janet's ample bosom. "Methinks 'twould be a good beginning, if thou wouldst renew thy suit by sending the maid to her chamber and let her espouse Morpheus and 'suage her grief upon a bosom thou needst not be jealous of." Janet arose and led forth Kath-

erine. Lord Cedric stepped after them and held out his hands and sobbed,—

"Kate, Kate, forgive, forgive!" She deigned not a backward look.

As they passed from sight, he fell upon his knees and shook with his great emotion and groaned aloud in his misery.

Sir Julian Pomphrey dressed as a gentleman of France in riding apparel; his overhanging top-boots displaying a leg of strength and fine proportions; the curls of his periwig sweeping his broad shoulders; his hands, half-hid by rare lace, gleaming white and be-jewelled; a mustachio so flattened with pomade it lay like a black line over his parted lips, through which shone strong white teeth, was veritably a man of noble character and distinction. He was the counterpart of Lord Cedric in all save visage and temperament.

Gracefully he strode across the room with the confidence of one who had already mastered the situation; planned for his Lordship a complete victory, and there was naught left to do but carry out the methodical arrangements thus quickly formulated. He placed his hand lightly upon Cedric's shoulder. His touch was like magic, for his Lordship started.

"Cedric, I have rid hard and would seek my bed. Come with me and calm thyself. Yonder maid thou shalt have, so sure as thou dost do

my bidding; and she will sigh and draw quick breath and preen herself to gain from thee one amorous glance; and will do penance for her untowardness and offer hecatombs as high as zenith will allow."

"Dost think so, Julian? It gives me hope to hear thee thus speak."

"Indeed, I may say—'tis done—even though 'twere precipitately avowed;—but oft, 'tis the premature babe that doth become the most precocious child, and 'tis well to foster that 'tis fecund."

"But, Julian, she hath another lover,—and now that I think on't, didst thou meet a knave upon horse, perhaps, attended by a swaggering groom as thou cam'st through the village or thereabouts?"

"Thou hast said it. A half-league beyond Crandlemar there past me at furious speed a devil-upon-horse. I hallowed once and again to no avail, so I prodded the fellow with my sword to assist his respiratory organs, as he flew by. 'Twas a kindly act, for he immediately found his breath and—swore."

"And didst notice his livery?"

"Nay, for the trees were too ostentatious and flaunted their new, green finery impudently and hid Neptune's satellite or—'twas cloudy, I could not see. Come, come, I must and thou, too, have sleep if the God thereof doth not wantonly spend

too much time with thy mistress;—but thou shalt soon offset him and I may have, for one night at least, his undivided attention."

"Ah, heaven, that thy words may prove true. 'Tis hard to bide the time. Come, let us begone from this foul nest that reeks of blood."

CHAPTER XI

JACQUES DEMPSY

To Katherine's untutored vision of social and religious matters, all appeared like a placid sea; but beneath, political dissension complicated by religious wrangling produced a vigorous undercurrent into which she was to be drawn.

The exegencies of poverty and exile through which King Charles had passed made him resolve not to "go again upon his travels," and for this cause he tolerated the Episcopal religion, of which system the cavaliers were votaries; and they supported the royal prerogative. Being an alien to honour, truth and virtue, he was not stirred to a wholesome interest of importunities, save when a voluptuously beautiful female solicited his attention. Now 'twas Lady Constance' plan to forward Count Cantemir's suit with Mistress Penwick and hasten a marriage that could only be clandestine, owing to Lord Cedric's vigilance. If this scheme should prove abortive, it was her intention to bring the maid to the king's notice. Here were two lines of battle, each surrounded by skirmishing detachments. She was subtle in the extreme, and arranged warily these

side issues, which had more of death and utter destruction in them than an open onset.

Rigidly she had kept from Cantemir the knowledge of Mistress Penwick's insolvency, likewise the death of her father; knowing the condition of the count's fortunes, she feared he would retreat; his love for the maid might be of such a nature 'twas possible he would not take part in the ugly skirmish against her. So Constance had set about systematically to bring Mistress Penwick and Adrian to an understanding of each other.

He believed Katherine to be a wealthy heiress of Sir John Penwick, who was being held as hostage at some point in America. At her marriage her estates would be placed in her own hands. All these things Lady Constance could vouch for, as she had read the letter herself that Sir John had written Lord Cedric. Mistress Penwick was at a marriageable age, and her father being ill and hopelessly bound by ties of war never expected to see her again and had made provision for her future happiness. Knowing these things, and being in love beside with so beautiful and youthful creature, Cantemir was well-nigh mad to win her, without any urging from Constance.

On the other hand, Mistress Penwick never forgot his slender grace and pale, patrician features, as she beheld him first upon the stairway

the evening of her arrival. He had ingratiated himself into all her thoughts of music and court life and religious duties. Being like her a Catholic, he sat by the hour and spoke of their ill usage by the nobles of England, and insinuated that the cavaliers (Lord Cedric being one, of course) were combined to rout out the Catholics and confiscate all their properties, both public and private.

At one time Lady Constance said to Katherine that her father, Sir John, was an Episcopalian and she had made answer,—" 'Twould be absurd to suppose him anything else than a Catholic." Upon this, Constance spoke to Adrian, and he, casually as it were, asked Mistress Penwick if she were not afraid her demesne would be seized by the Protestants. Thus she had come gradually to know of the chasm between the two great religious orders, and had even written her father of the dangers in which she believed she was placed. These letters of course were kept by Janet. The seals remained unbroken and the missives were carefully laid aside until Mistress Penwick should know the truth. And neither she nor Janet receiving news from him, stirred her to confide her fears to Cantemir, who questioned her of the letter which her father wrote, bidding her to depart for England. She became startled and uneasy, when she remembered that Janet had refused to show her the letter and

having promised herself to Cantemir in marriage, she spoke of the matter to him. But her love of and confidence in Janet was deeper than she thought, and at his first words against her, she fell from him. He said 'twas possible Janet, being so great a Protestant, she would undoubtedly take his Lordship's part against her, should any serious trouble arise. He even went so far as to suggest that perhaps there was a-foot a ruse to get from her those possessions her father had written of. Katherine rebelled at these insinuations and thought that "dear, good, sweet Janet would never take a pin from her Lambkin to save Church or State. And Lord Cedric, too, even though he would condemn his servant, he would never take her property, he loved her too well for that; beside, he was a gentleman of honour, even though his evil temper did goad him to fearful deeds." She tried to make herself believe that she truly loved Cantemir, and 'twas her religious duty to marry him; but when he spoke either against Cedric or Janet, she was quite sure she hated him.

In pursuance of Lady Constance' diplomacy, she had assisted Cantemir in arranging the *rendezvous* for himself first, and finally for Christopher, who was to escape with provision for a long journey, as 'twas not certain what Lord Cedric would do if he found him at the monastery. And Katherine had this night pledged to

wed the count in three days' time. Even as they were arranging their plans Cantemir's valet had rushed to him saying that his Lordship's page had come to his apartments, and finding him gone his master had vowed death to any who would intrigue at such hours with his promised wife. Cantemir, a polished, hollow-hearted, selfish sycophant and coward, made more so perhaps by Constance' influence over him, at Katherine's command, as it were, had taken flight.

Constance listened eagerly the next morning, as she sat 'neath her maid's hands, to every detail of the evening's adventure; but her disappointment at such mischance was greatly allayed by the unexpected presence of Sir Julian Pomphrey. He was second only to Lord Cedric in her affections. Her greatest desire was to gain his Lordship's love; if she could not have that, then she would try for the king's favour whereby she would be able to live at court and be ever near Sir Julian, whose mistress she had been and might be again.

She had begun well to bombard for the accomplishment of her first desire.

As soon as possible she rode forth, passing beyond Crandlemar village, where a short way from its confines she came upon a certain innocent-looking tree that had some six feet above its broad trunk a loosened knot, which could be removed at will. She plucked it forth and

looked within. It was empty and barren of even a bird's nest. Constance had no compassion for its loneliness when she laid therein a small, white piece of paper and filled the orifice with the rough knot. She rode away content and doubting not that Count Cantemir would soon have her letter.

He had halted some five leagues beyond Crandlemar at an inn remote from the highway, the landlord of which was a monk, dissembling his name to Jacques Dempsy of the Cow and Horn, and his religion to anything that was the king's pleasure.

The two sat in the deserted drinking-room; their heads bent together and speaking in subdued tones. Cantemir's hand rested upon his leg, that had been freshly washed and bound by the landlord.

Sir Julian's sword-prick had goaded Cantemir to an anger that was 'suaged neither by good old wine nor the council of the monk. He fretted for an opportunity to thrust his assailant in the back—anywhere. "Surely," said he, "the day is not far when I shall kill that devil Pomphrey." His groom had seen Sir Julian full in the face at a small opening in the trees.

"Sh!" said Dempsy, "there is other work for thee now. 'Tis best for thee to bide here awhile, at least until a courier shall return from the tree, where thou sayest thy cousin will place the

billet. And if everything is well, then there will be found for thee a guide to lead thee through the forest to the monastery, where thou shalt first sign thyself for the strict carrying out of our plans; then thou shalt be wed, if there is no remissness, and carried safely to London, where thou shalt remain until thy lady has audience, and gains that we seek of the King. Ah! there are times when we sigh and almost weep for those good old *pro*-Reformation days, when such ecclesiastical bodies as ours took their grievances to—Rome. Bah! to have to bribe a profligate king for—the signing of his name. What does he know about bequests and inheritances—" The count started and Dempsy all alert broke in with,—"and freeholds. Thou dost know, count, the monastery is a freehold in the very centre of Lord Cedric's lands; but—I am telling secrets; forget what I said." The count fell back listlessly, a gap made in his thoughts by the sudden disappearance of a clue.

"Charles treats us as mendicants; but if he should chance to see the coffers of our order, he would know we had received something else beside a crust for shriving." The count looked up again so quickly, Dempsy caught himself and wondered what he had been saying, and what his last words were; for he had been thinking aloud, as it were.

"Aye, aye, I was saying if Charles could see

the riches of our coffers, he would know the sale of Indulgences had not been a little. Thou seest, count, we have here at the monastery great treasure, our coffers are filled with priceless articles of virtue that will, no doubt, be carried to Rome and be laid in the reliquary of Santa Maria Maggiore or St. Andrew Corsini or St. Peters. We have some priceless bones—" Adrian shuddered and relaxed his attention—"they have brought us great, good fortune; we have bits of clothing—thou dost well know most of the saints were plainly attired—that some day will be worth much, perhaps not in my day nor thine, but when age comes, when we grow a little further from the saints. Ah! I see, thou hast not much interest in my converse—treasure is nothing to thy love-sick heart, eh! count?"

"Nay, not dead men's bones, indeed thou hast rare wine for such cumbrous relics that can be turned to naught! And didst thou shrive the saint for the use of his bones a hundred years hence?"

"Thou art growing facetious, count. Dost think of no virtue but thy maid's? And art thou sure she will not fall back from her promise to thee?"

Cantemir, filled with his own ideas, gave perfunctory acquiescence and continued in his own line of thought. And what with a busy brain that was not over-strong, and a ride of some

length and dampness, with a sore leg, he became feverish and the monk took him to bed in great haste, where he remained for the best part of a week; the seriousness of his disease not a little augmented by the desire for immediate action.

CHAPTER XII

CASTLE AND MONASTERY

THE next morning after Christopher's sudden disaster, the castle seemed to have awakened from a long apathy. The servants clattered under breath of their wounded fellow. The arrival of his Grace of Ellswold's physicians held gossip in the castle in abeyance, as all were anxious of their decision; but the presence of Sir Julian seemed to fill the sails of the becalmed household with a stiff breeze, which at a favourable moment would raise anchor and fly forth on a joyous sea.

The physicians gave out that there was no immediate danger, but his illness was serious and there must neither be noise nor excitement. It was out of the question to move his Grace either to his own estates or elsewhere for baths or sea air.

Lord Cedric and Sir Julian sat with him an hour after the doctor's examination, Sir Julian, conversing of the freshest gossip at court, without the usual condiment of inflammables which would be apt to rouse his Grace not a little.

There being now no traitor—unless perchance

Constance might be termed one—in the house, and no danger of Mistress Penwick being left without the close surveillance of Janet, she was no longer kept prisoner. And, while she was greatly wrought upon by the sad havoc of the previous night, her youth and gay spirits and Janet's exhortations upon the age, giving license to all sorts of uprisings and display of temper and unwarranted vengeance, somewhat quieted her, and she arose as sprightly as ever, all the more determined to free herself from Lord Cedric. If she had stopped for self-analysis, she would have found that she was bent on gaining her independence at no matter what cost; regardless of consequences. That her desire was more of adventure than ambition. And she also would have found that she cared naught for Cantemir and a very great deal for Lord Cedric. She had never given thought to a separation from her beloved Janet; while even classing her as antagonistic to her desires, she never ceased to love her; for this woman had made herself a mother in every respect, aye, even more watchful and exacting. While acting in a servant's capacity, doing the most menial of service, she developed in the maid those seemingly trifling motives of mind and soul which in the end make up the character of a life; and very few mothers ever have the tact to so understand these very minute details that so develop a child's passion.

Janet had ever developed in her charge an inclination for all beauty; not failing, however, to show wherein weakness crept; where grace of countenance oft screened defect of character. Indeed this maid was one of Janet's own creation, save in flesh and blood, and no one knew any better than she, herself, the vanity to rout the faults and frailties inherited. She strove the harder to overthrow such imperfections by perfecting and cultivating the maid's receptive mood. She was ever fencing with her in words, working out in detail exchange of thought wherein Katherine might, if 'twere in her, make a clever reply. At times Mistress Penwick would pick up such threads of Janet's teaching as would bring her to a semblance of conscience of present environment, and she would see in a vague way the right and wrong of things. For the moment she would read all in Cantemir's handsome face that it masqued and would turn from it only to become lost in contemplation of what life would be if she were free from Cedric's guardianship, never thinking of the greater bondage of espousing a knave. Ever and anon her eyes sought the young lord of the castle, forgetting she was his ward—and there would come to her such a feeling of overwhelming conviction she was for the moment submerged in ecstasy, and with the hot blush still upon her face she would flee from him as if he were an evil tempter. He brought her

near to that great unknown, upon whose threshold she stood trembling and expectant, eager to know what was before her. And so, not understanding her own mind, and being of such tender years, drifted along with the tide that was carrying her to destruction. Her mind was set upon her own way, and sheer perversity deigned not to let her see the hands stretched toward her.

The afternoon sun fell aslant the black oak parquetry where sat her Grace of Ellswold, Lady Constance and Mistress Penwick, engaged with limning and embroidery. Lord Cedric and Sir Julian entered, attired in the most modish foppery of the time. The latter was saying, as he soundly rapped his pouncet-box,—

"His demeanour is too provincial, too provincial—ah!"— and he bent low with grave formality to Mistress Penwick as Cedric presented him; then turning to the duchess continued,— "I was saying, your Grace, that Dryden is provincial in his demeanour, when compared to his Grace of Buckingham."

"Indeed, Julian, thou dost speak lightly of such gigantic genius; beside, 'twould not be fair to compare sun and moon; and how could we do without either the one or the other?"

"To which dost thou comparison his Grace?"

"The moon, of course!" said the Duchess.

"And to what planet is my lord a satellite?"

"Nay, I know not; thou dost question of one

who knows little of astronomy; but I think perhaps Mars, as the planet doth resemble earth more closely than any other."

"Bravo, 'tis a rare simile; and I take it thou didst speak in derogation;—no matter how true the *inuendo*, it is ever the material we most appreciate and enjoy, and the sun being nearly ninety-three million miles from the earth, 'tis too remote to be interesting."

"Indeed, Julian, Dryden in five minutes' converse will stir one to seriousness by his fancy, to tears by his pathos, and to thoughts of deity by his sublimity."

"'Tis only a great, good, noble nature like thine that could be so stirred; believe me, your Grace, thou didst dissemble these emotions from pure charity."

"Well, well, we must all admit that 'tis not his character that commands our respect and esteem, but his prose and poesy. We all love Buckingham, but in our appreciation of him we must not exclude reason and put him before all others,"—and her Grace turned abruptly to Mistress Penwick. "Here is an admirer of Dryden's compositions, she clings pertinaciously and with all the ardour of strong youth to his satire of 'Absalom and Achitophel,' although 'tis a bitter lampoon on Monmouth and Shaftesbury; two men she heartily admires." Sir Julian leant over the Duchess and spoke softly,—

"I was not aware Mistress Penwick had been presented?" And his keen eyes scanned every lineament of her face and mould. Lord Cedric was watching askance, and his face grew red with a stroke of passion as he noted Sir Julian's look of evident admiration, and jealousy for a moment swept the young lord's heart, and he cursed in thought the wicked feeling that in connection with his noble friend could predicate of naught but the foul fiends. Indeed, so open were Sir Julian's glances that the maid herself became confused and said, with some embarrassment,—

"My imagination is ofttime profligate, and I indulge—in fancy—in exchange of word and thought with those great and exalted personages whose noble compeers I have the good fortune to consort with daily." And she laid her hand caressingly upon the Duchess' arm.

"Then 'twould serve thee greatly to place thee within the shadow of Whitehall, aye, Mistress?"

"'Twould be a great happiness, Sir Julian."

"Dost know of any greater, my lady?" It seemed his eyes would pierce her very soul.

"I must admit it; I have a great desire," and her face grew rose-hued and her heart fluttered with the bold words she was about to utter—

"Ah, thou dost wish for, or have a desire to enter the——"

"The distinguished service of a Lady of Hon-

our." As one looked upon her great beauty, 'twas a wonder she was not born a queen.

Upon hearing the maid's words, Constance in jealous rage fell to inordinate laughter and shook her work to the floor, and as Lord Cedric stooped to regain it he whipped out,—

"And why, pray, art thou so amused; 'tis most like Julian to promote this idea, and she will straightway wish to leave us. I am sure one glimpse of her would set the whole court on fire."

"Such startling metaphor, unless indeed thou dost allude to the colour of her hair!" She spoke with so much malice and hate Lord Cedric was stirred to amazement, and for the first time his eyes were opened to Constance' hate of one whom he loved beyond all else on earth. He had thought her merely jealous of the maid, but now he saw 'twas hatred.

Sir Julian paid no heed to aught save Mistress Penwick's brave colour as it came and went, and the fervour of her eyes as they looked into his. He came nearer to being shaken than ever before in his twenty odd years of slow and fast living.

"If I might be so honoured by the privilege, I would present thy desire straightway to the Duchess here, who would no doubt place thee at once at court." Mistress Penwick arose, unable to contain her perturbed spirit, and said,—

"Sir Julian, how can I ever—" and she stopped, so stirred was she with her emotion; very much as a child is wrought to wonderment by the sight of a marvelous toy. Julian offered his arm, and they sauntered up and down the room, Sir Julian boldly playing his part. If Katherine had been less innocent, she might have seen that he was not sincere. He said:

"I see no reason why thou shouldst not begin preparation at once for thy journey. The Duke is progressing finely and her Grace could perhaps accompany thee as well now as at another time. Wilt thou prepare at once, Mistress Penwick?" If the king had already sent for her, he could not have talked with more confidence; but there was something he must know. As he insisted on an immediate journey, she turned scarlet, and bit her lip, and frowned.

"There are a few matters I must see to; I could hardly leave within a week;—there is no hurry!"

"On the contrary there is a great hurry, for I must leave at once, and I would escort thee. I think I shall leave by dawn to-morrow." Katherine's brow puckered still more as she stood upon the seesaw of duty and ambition, perplexed to know which way to turn. It appeared the better quality was innate and her brow cleared, as she said,—

"'Twould be impossible to go so soon. I

could not ask her Grace to leave when the Duke is so ill; for, beside a long journey, much time might be required ere I should be presented. I must have time—a lady should have a great number to attend her——"

"Thou hast a host in thy nurse, Janet; she is quite enough for the journey, and at London there will be a matron for each finger of thy hand. I can see no reason why thou shouldst not start at once, if the Duchess so decides." They were quite alone now, and Katherine, being well cornered and being young and given to confiding, felt so irresistibly drawn toward this man at her side, she looked up into his face and said,—

"Canst thou not guess, after all thou didst see last night, why I am kept from going?"

"I cannot; methinks 'twould be a happy moment to say *adieu* to such scenes."

"Then thou dost not know I am to wed Count Cantemir, Lady Constance' cousin?"

"I think thy heart an alien to love; for if thou wouldst sooner become a Lady of Honour than wed one to whom thou hast 'trothed thyself, 'tis sure thou hast no love; 'tis caprice or—what one wills to call it, and thou hadst better fly from a marriage that has not love in it."

"But I know not what to do. I have given my promise to wed, and I want to go to London."

"Then I beg to assist thee to thy heart's desire

as soon as thou hast found what its desire is; and I insist thou dost examine the weather-vane of thy mind and discern its bent. I am by thy side, groping in darkness for that thou wouldst have. I am bound to serve thee."

"Sir Julian, thou dost nonplus my understanding of myself absurdly. I agree I have more minds than one, and 'tis disconcerting to try in haste to ascertain which is the best. Indeed, I do not wish to make a false step and do that 'twould make me sorry ever after."

"'Twould be well to have one to guide thee in thine uncertainty. I should aspire to such an office with alacrity, if thou wouldst but give me one encouraging glance." For a moment they looked into each other's eyes, then Katherine's lids dropped and she became as clay in his hands. And before she was aware, she had told him all things. These matters were not altogether new to Sir Julian, for Lord Cedric had discoursed at length upon them, but the nucleus he sought was found, and he listened perfunctorily to all else, feasting his eyes upon her face and listening only to the music of her voice.

"Then why, may I ask, didst thou discard Cedric's suit?"

"He is tyrannical and cruel, and even though my heart should incline toward him, 'twould not be meet for me to wed with one of another faith."

"'Tis possible thou couldst win him to thy way of thinking."

"Nay, I should not try it; for I have cast all thought of him aside."

"Then thou dost acknowledge having had a tenderness for him? 'Tis well thou dost so fling him aside, he is unworthy of thy consideration."

"Not so; he is most noble, but—but—I know not what,—he is haughty and full of temper and given to harsh language ——"

"Yet he is not a fit companion for thee, sayest thou?"

"Thou dost greatly misunderstand me; he is on the contrary a most delightful person to converse with and every whit fit to be a King;—but we are not suited to each other."

"Was it not thy father's desire for thee to soon wed and to this man?"

"Even so; but he knew not my Lord Cedric but his father; beside ——"

"Well ——"

"I am expecting to hear from my father in the near future ——"

"Ah!"

"——and 'tis possible he will come to me or send and make some change. I have asked him to appoint another guardian for me and my estates."

"'Twould be a wise thing to do, no doubt; but 'tis possible Cedric has used already thine inheritance." Mistress Penwick flushed hotly.

"Nay, thou dost judge him ill; he is above such a thing." And Sir Julian knew what the poor maid knew not herself, and he felt 'twas a safe thing to carry through his adventure.

"Then there are two things that weigh upon thee. Thou knowest not whether to wed or become a Lady of Honour. I will warn thee that thou must not dwell long upon them, for 'tis possible if thou dost not decide very early, I will be able to help thee to nothing but—myself."

Mistress Penwick flushed warmly and smiled back at him; and her desire for admiration drove her on and on, and she soon forgot all else save the man by her side, and it appeared that no matter how he tried to break the spell of her witchery, he could not leave her for a moment.

It fell out that before three days had passed, they were deep in admiration of each other. Cedric was racked by doubt and fear, yet never for an instant letting go his faith in Julian. Constance was happy that Katherine was so diverted, keeping thereby Cedric from any rash moves, and giving herself time to visit the tree that often held so much of importance. And she managed to outwit the ubiquitous Janet and hailed with joy the day of the great battle when Mistress Penwick was to be removed from her pathway forever.

The disappearance of Adrian Cantemir was not spoken of—as if 'twere a matter of too small

import;—and yet he hovered ominously in their minds; and Katherine most of all desired to forget her promise and every word she had spoken to him, and Constance understood and would not let her forget, planning night and day to bring them together again. . . .

To look back from the lower terrace at the castle was to see a gorgeous display of blossom. The ivy-clad walls stood a rich background to the splendour of tinted flower. Indeed, the scene appeared not unlike an enormous nosegay lying upon a hill of moss. The night had brought showers, and from every minute projection of twig, leaf or petal glistened limpid drops, some swelling with honey and falling like dew upon the young sward. The birds twittered ceaselessly, and some young thing preening upon a light blossomy twig scattered down, anon, perfume upon some shy young fawn, and he leapt away frightened by so dainty a bath and plunged knee-deep in crystal pools and sent the stately swans skimming hurriedly to a quiet and sheltered cove.

From the Chapel came indistinctly the sound of the organ in a prelude, it would seem, to the day. 'Twas Sir Julian's wont to rise early and draw—it may be—inspiration from the full vibrant chords of sweet harmony.

From an upper casement leant forth Mistress Penwick with a face as delicately tinted as the blossoms of the peach that flaunted their

beauty at some distance. She appeared to be arranging violets—that still sparkled with rain—in an oblong porcelain box that lay flat upon the casement. Her white jewelled fingers flitted in and out of the blue depths. Her small white teeth were but half eclipsed and there fluttered forth from her parted lips a low humming that keyed and blended with the organ. Her soft white dress enveloped her mould loosely; her long flowing sleeves, prefaced by rare lace, displaying her pink, round arm. She wore not the look of care; for she had thrown all such evil weight upon one who played in yonder sacred shrine so tranquilly, as if nothing but his own sins rested—and they but feather-weight—upon his soul. On he played, and she arranged her flowers, and up the avenue came horses' feet and Lady Constance unattended came riding near the castle and called up to the vision of beauty that leant from the window,—

"'Tis a glorious morning for riding forth. I have had a fine jaunt and met nothing but the post-boy,"—and here she showed a billet and rode close to the wall and hid it neath the ivy —"and a famous adventure which I've half a mind to pursue, after—I've 'suaged my hunger. If I ride thus every morning, I shall soon have an arm as pink and round and perfect in mould as thine own. Hast thou broken fast?"

"I have had my simple allotment, and have

been down on the lower terraces and gathered these violets, and am now hungry again and Janet has gone for a wing of fowl and some wine." At these words Lady Constance looked about her cautiously and spoke in low tones,—

"Everything is ready for thy flight. I saw Adrian this morning. He is handsomer than ever and eager to see thee, and counts the hours 'til nightfall. If 'tis possible thou art to escape unnoticed to the monastery, where the nuptials will be performed at once, then thou art to depart immediately for Whitehall, where thou wilt be made much of by the King and he will more like detain thy husband under pretext, and mayhap offer him some honour for the sake of keeping thy beauty in England."—With a wave of the hand Mistress Penwick bade Lady Constance depart as Janet stood within the door.

The castle was astir early, as if there was naught but a glorious day before them, and they would make it of much length. It seemed as if a great peace had settled upon those ivy-clad walls, or it might be the calm that is the solemn presage of storm, and Sir Julian himself quiet beyond his wont seemed to portend the calamities that were to ensue; and after his breakfast stood at a window watching the dripping trees and whistling so softly one could not tell whether 'twere he or the birds chirping without. Cedric and Lady Constance played at battledore and

shuttlecock. Mistress Penwick sat apart, busy with thought and needle. His Grace of Ellswold sat up that morning, his wife and physicians by his side, and all were happy with the great improvement.

Meanwhile, at the monastery all was commotion. The day there would be far too short to accomplish all that was to be done. Three couriers had arrived since dawn with important dispatches. In the midst of the monks, who sat upon long benches that flanked either side of a spacious gallery, sat Adrian Cantemir, reading the last message. Opposite, at the table, were three monks apparently engaged upon their own affairs, but subtly watching the puzzled countenance of their guest. Finally their patience seemed to have run out and Constantine, the monk directly *vis-a-vis* to Cantemir, coughed, cleared his throat and in low gutterals said,—

"Thy countenance is unfair; 'tis a perjury on thy happy heart." Adrian looked up with a start, so lost was he in contemplation. His letter was prophetic of evil, and he was afraid.

"'Tis ill news, and thou wert not far wrong to bring forth thine arms. The secrets to be intrusted to my wife it seems have already reached ——"

"The King?" and with the words it appeared each Abbé was upon his feet and leaning forward intent.

"Nay, but the arch-fiends Buckingham and

Monmouth. And with the King's consent they leave for a hunting bout and they ride hither. It says that the former in masque saw my meeting this morning with Lady Constance, and he followed and made love to her." The Abbes stood in utter dismay and dejection. At last, Dempsy of the Cow and Horn began in deep, full tones the first movement of the "Kyrie eleison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie eleison," and one by one every voice leapt up in a God-have-mercy, and the walls echoed and without the birds seemed to take it up, and it was carried to a listening ear not far from the shadow of the wall. Then the prayer ceased and La Fosse—half soldier, half priest—spoke in ringing tones.

"And what else does thy billet say? Why are we to be attacked; are we not upon our own ground?"

"It is mooted that should my wife gain the King's ear, she will influence him to consent not only on this thy matter but others of great importance that now pend. It is said that Buckingham has boasted of rare sport in routing a full score of knaves; taking treasure—" Cantemir's eyes swept keenly the visage of Constantine—"of great value, beside the beauteous maid that is to arrive; for he says 'tis sure she will be worth as much to them as the King. He refers to himself and Monmouth, who mean to take my wife prisoner this very night."

"'Tis enough," said La Fosse, with a deprecating gesture. "We must put on the armour of strength and gird ourselves for battle. We have all to fight for that that is honourable: home, virtue and religion. What more could we ask for to strengthen us?"

"'Tis well said," quoth Constantine. "Judging from thy billet, we are not to be attacked until the maid hath arrived. Is it known, also, at what hour she is to come?"

"If they know so much, they perhaps know even all."

"Then we must hasten the hour by two, and 'twill incur no disadvantage save to bring the maid to a greater discretion and show of wit; for 'twill be harder for her to escape at nine than eleven."

"Methinks 'twill be a greater task to warn the maid of the setting forth of the hour." Adrian looked up hopefully; for he was of no mind to meet his wife upon the threshold of a battle, and two hours earlier, 'twould be time and to spare, and he spoke out bravely,—

"I'll see to the message," and he was guilty of a low-bred wink at Dempsy.

"Then 'twill serve to set aside this matter for the next," and La Fosse looking at Cantemir and speaking softly and deferentially bade him leave them for the present.

Adrian left the room by the door he had en-

tered it, and passing through a hall re-entered the chamber that had been assigned him.

The Russian, though a coward, was wary at times and allowed it to carry him into danger, and as an example he changed his riding garb for his cavalier costume, discarding his spurred boots for high-heeled slippers and deigning not to don coat or waistcoat started forth in search of—he must think what? He was without servant, as 'twas safer to leave him at the Cow and Horn;—especially one who has corners on his conscience. He must search for—the kitchen. This place was below stairs, and he stole this way and that to find a flight of steps. Treading softly, listening intently and looking ravenously for opportunity to plunder, for there was treasure somewhere about the monastery, this was certain, and he might as well have part of it as Buckingham and Monmouth to have it all. And in case of any mischance and Mistress Penwick be lost to him, he must have something to live upon. Constance would never forgive him for allowing the maid to escape him, and consequently would not give him large loans as heretofore. But if he should gain the fair prize, some day he would give back to his church even more than he had taken. As he thus thought, he forgot for a moment his present surroundings and was suddenly reminded by a touch on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XIII

AS NINE TOLLED FROM THE CHAPEL BELFRY

He started quickly and looked up shuddering, and saw a tall, slender monk with cowl so drawn not a feature could be seen. The Abbé spoke low and hoarsely, as though a cold prevented better utterance,—

"What seekest thou?"

"The kitchen," Cantemir answered, with a great show of bravery.

"And what there to find, my young man?"

"Pen and paper. I must write to Mistress Penwick."

"Ah yes, ah yes, my son. I had forgotten. Curve thy sentences to the point, without being so broad in assertion another might understand. Thou hadst better put it this way ——"

"Indeed I thought I had my meaning well covered. I had proposed to say ——"

"Ah, we are not alone; step this way." The monk turned to a panelling that gave way by a touch, and to Cantemir's surprise they were alone in a dark and vaulted passage; indeed they were unable to discern aught. Quickly the Abbé drew his companion from the panelling through which they had passed; and 'twas hardly done when

three monks followed with lighted candles. The foremost was Constantine, carrying an enormous bunch of keys. Their long robes swept Cantemir's feet. He drew a quick breath, and before it sounded his companion placed his hand over his mouth. Now this hand smacked not of holy mould or monastic incense, but rather of rare perfume; but Cantemir was frightened and did not notice the worldliness of the admonishing hand. The monks proceeded down the passage; stopping near the centre they lifted from the floor a trapdoor. A ladder was brought and swung down the opening and the three descended.

"Now, my son, thou hadst better write thy billet, and if thou dost not find one to carry it, I will be along directly and do the service for thee. I must visit the village and the tree, my son. Now I'll give thee a bit of advice. Never again go about looking for anything where 'tis supposed there is treasure. If it had not been for my timely interruption, my brothers there would have found thee and not so easily forgiven thy inclination for discovery. Go, go in peace—remember always, that discretion is the wit of safety."

Cantemir was frightened, and glad to get away, for he feared the Abbé's smooth tones masqued treachery, and he slid through the panelling and in very earnest sought the kitchen.

The deceitful monk hastened toward the open

trap and kneeling gazed for a moment below. There came up a foul odour that made him flinch and draw back; he drew his handkerchief and placed it to his nose and leant again and looked. There was a faint glimmer that showed in which direction the lights were. He lay flat and putting his head beneath the opening, saw the priests leaning over a chest. Quickly he prepared to descend and was upon the second rung of the ladder, when the panelling again opened and a half-dozen faces looked through; anger and indignation upon all but one, and that was the Russian's, which bore joy of a discovery. He had gone to the refectory with good intent to write his letter; but finding a small company of monks gathered there and they appearing much perturbed, he asked the cause. One said there was a strange Abbé in the monastery, whose hands were as bejewelled as any fop's, and that a number had gone in search of him. The false monk's hand had betrayed him, as 'twas seen from a window as he uncovered it to open the door. Now Cantemir thought it a good, safe moment to become a hero and straightway told of his encounter; saying he was in search of the refectory and had lost his way; making a plausible story. He was carried forth with the party in search and now came toward the opening in the passage with drawn sword, his face wearing the masque of bravery.

The man upon the ladder was the same that had listened to the "Kyrie eleison" from without, and before it concluded had made his way inside: the Duke of Buckingham.

He jumped like a cat under cover of his pursuer's noisy entrance and slipped away from the opening. Quickly he drew from him the robe and cowl and flung them down upon the ladder and drawing his sword stood waiting and almost eager for a fight. He did not forget, however, that there is often a practiced and keen thrust from the folds of a priest's habit. But they were confident the false Abbé was beneath, and with less noise and more subtleness moved toward the opening. As they did so, his Grace swung round and cautiously approached the wall where the panelling was. "Aye, aye," he heard, as the foremost man found the robe. Straightway they all rushed below stair, and as the head of the last man disappeared, his Grace went through the panelling, and within five minutes stood safe in the forest, happy with the knowledge he had gained.

It was near the hour of five when Lady Constance rode forth alone. She left the courtyard unnoticed and hurried to the village and through it and on beyond toward the tree and passed it and galloped some distance beyond, then seeing she was not followed made a quick turn and retraced. But there came from a bend in the road

a horseman that rode warily. She again turned to see if any came, and seeing no one stopped at the tree and brought from its cavity a letter. As she replaced the knot, there was such a sudden sound of horses' feet behind her she dropped the billet and her unknown squire leapt from his horse to recover it, and stood uncovered before her with such a long, low bow of homage he had most time to read the missive. Lady Constance was flattered and felt surely that one with such courtly dress and bearing could be nothing less than a Duke and his wearing of a full masque made her doubly sure of it. She flushed and reached out her hand for the letter and spoke in her most seductive tones,—

"My lord,"—he looked up and saw on her pretty, though characterless face a smile that warranted a further acquaintance. He placed the letter in her hand slowly, then caught her hand and held it firmly; indeed their hands touched and lingered together with such intention it conveyed much more meaning than words. Constance had all the outward show of a great lady, but at soul she was putrescent. There came such a heartrending sigh from her cavalier she spoke in a most tender tone,—

"And why such sighing?"

"Is it not enough, sweet lady?"

"I am at a loss?"

"Nay, rather 'tis I that am at loss; for I

had sought to gain thy favour undivided, and I meet with thee only to give into thy hands a trysting billet that lifts thy glorious orbs above me." He bowed low in mock humility. Constance' heart fluttered at his ardent words.

"I would fain know who thus sues for a woman's love; 'tis possible—" He lowered his masque. "Ah, his Grace of Monmouth!" She well-nigh prostrated herself upon the saddle, in lieu of the fine courtesy she would have swept had her position been more favourable. His words—such gloriously sweet words when uttered by the lips of a Duke—fed her vanity. Her face flushed as she thought of what his love must be. He saw his vantage and drew nearer—it may be a hair's breadth over the line of respect—indeed 'twould have been an innovation had he not done so, as the time warranted nothing else but a show at virtue.

"Your Grace finds a maid that is heart whole; but I would aid others to their desire. I but act as post-boy 'twixt tree and castle."

"Thou art cold and cruel. I can see well thou dost hold tightly to thy bosom thy billet; thou art afraid 'twill betray thee. Thou art the maid herself that doth own it?" Constance had a burning curiosity to know why Monmouth was in the neighbourhood of Crandlemar, and though he insinuated he had come purposely to see her, yet she was not blind and wondered what di-

plomacy she could use to gain from him the desired knowledge. Could it be possible he had come on behalf of the King, and if so, for what business? The Catholics surely had not been so indiscreet as to allow their affairs to reach the King's ears? And if so, why should he send to them? It was not at all likely any one knew of the monastery so hidden away in a dense forest. Could it be that the beauty of Mistress Penwick had become notorious at Whitehall and that the Duke was hunting for her? These thoughts passed speedily through her brain, while the ogling Monmouth waited for her answer to his accusation. She spoke with a shy little twist of her head, vainly trying to blush like little innocence.

"How can I hold out against thee, Duke? Thou dost steal my secret; here, then, read it for thyself." With a lightening glance he finished reading what he had begun before.

"I was right, sweet Katherine; 'tis a trysting letter, and thou art to go to him to-night at nine? Thou shalt not; I'll have thee for myself." Now they had made a great mistake. Constance thought to convince the Duke she had no lover. He misunderstood and believed her to be the Katherine he had come after. She, thinking to gain his secret, allowed him to think so, and quickly took up her new part.

"Thou dost embarrass me, Duke!"

"In very truth," said he, "we have heard of thy great beauty at Whitehall, and have come hither to claim thee for ourselves. Thou shalt be my very own, sweet Katherine. The King was about to send forth to Crandlemar to enquire of his Grace of Ellswold. We asked for the service, that we might gain sight of thy rare beauty. We are about to pay our respects to the Duke who lies yonder, and at the King's order bring him important news. We have heard, however, his condition is most critical, and we cannot see him until high noon to-morrow, as the midday finds him stronger. And I must see thee, sweet one, again before the night is over. I cannot wait for the morrow's noon." He caught her hand and pressed his lips to it, resting himself against the horse, his arm thrown carelessly across Constance' knee. She deemed it an honour to be in such close proximity to the royal Duke, and grew red with his amorous glances and soft-spoken words and the familiarity of his arm upon her.

"Indeed, it doth seem to me also like a very long time to wait," and she sighed heavily. At this Monmouth drew her down and kissed her upon her thin, arrogant lips. She, wellnigh beside herself, exclaimed in a thin, high voice,—

"Ah, ah, Duke, thou dost kill me—I must hasten away from thee. I must go." She spurred

her horse; but the Duke caught the rein and held it fast.

"Nay, nay, thou shalt not yet be gone. Wouldst thou be so cruel to leave me now at Love's first onset? I will not have it!"

"But I must hasten,—I am riding alone, and some one will be sent for me if I do not soon return to the castle."

"Thou must give me promise first, sweet one!"

"Promise,—promise of what?" and she listened eagerly to his next words.

"Dost thou not covet a Prince's favour?" Constance' heart fluttered mightily, and she thought—"A fig for Cedric's love of me. He loves not at all, compared with this man's warm passion. Cedric loves me not at all, anyway. I will be a Prince's favourite," and she answered,—

"I never covet that which is beyond my reach." 'Tis often a true thing that when we sit within our dark and dismal chamber without comfort, hope or happy retrospection, there stands upon the threshold a joyous phenomenon of which we have never so much as dreamt as being in existence; and this had come to Constance. If the Duke loved her, what would it matter if Cedric did love Katherine? She could not compel him to love her.

"Ah, sweet Katherine, how can one covet that they already possess? I would teach thee to en-

joy all that such beauty as thine is heir to. Thou wilt come to me to-night?"

"To-night!" and Lady Constance fairly gasped.

"To-night, fair one, on the stroke of nine thou wilt pass through the postern door of the castle and fall into my arms,—here, take this, sweet, to pledge thyself." He slipped from his finger a ring of marvellous beauty and essayed to place it upon her hand.

"Nay, I cannot. I should be seen to go forth at so early an hour,—and I know thee not!"

"Thou art not afraid of me? Nay, I am one of the most gentle and tender ——"

"But where wilt thou take me, your Grace?"

"I will take thee to my heart, and if thou art unhappy, thou mayest return when thou desirest; but 'twill be my pleasure to keep thee with me alway; we will go to London." Constance, having read the letter, knew it would not do for her to leave the drawing-room at the same hour with Katherine, and she hardly knew what to do.

"Indeed, I have no wish to see a duel upon my Lord Cedric's grounds, thou must come later. My love will perhaps wait an hour,—thou mayest come at twelve."

"And allow him to come first and steal thee; nay, I protest." Constance felt somewhat dubious. The Duke saw it, and hastened to reassure her.

"If thou wilt sit near the window on the stroke

of nine, I will let thy lover go; but if thou dost pass from my sight, I will run the fellow through; and thou mayest come to me at twelve!"

To this Constance agreed, and allowed him to place the ring; and he kissing her again with fervour, let her go, exultant.

'Twas a glorious, clear, warm night. The castle was aglow and merry. Lady Bettie Payne and Sir Rodger Mac Veigh and Sir Jasper Kenworthy and sundry other shire folk had come to while away a spring night. The gentlemen were playing at cup and ball; Lady Constance and Lady Bettie were gossiping of Court scandal, when in swept her Grace of Ellswold with Mistress Penwick, the latter such a vision of loveliness the game was suspended for a moment, and Constance and Bettie looked up to see why all eyes were turned from them.

The maid wore a pale-hued brocade gown of sweeping length of skirt, and short, round bodice and low-neck and long sleeves that tightly encased her plump, pink arms. Her mother's pearls lay glistening about her slender neck, and falling low was caught again by some caprice of mode high where met sleeve and waist, and here a rare bunch of fragrant violets shone bravely as a shoulder knot.

Lord Cedric saw her first, and was well-nigh drunk with her beauty, and he advanced and bent low, kissing her hand that trembled in his own.

He raised his eyes to hers, she looking fairly at him with a ready smile.

"Kate, Kate—" Such a flood of emotion came upon him he was bereft of speech. She looked at him surprised, and wondered if he knew aught. Could it be that Sir Julian had found out anything and had spoken to Cedric? She was sure she had kept this last secret safe from all save Constance, and had not been with Sir Julian for a whole day, fearing he would find out by looking at her. Nay, he knew nothing,—beside, if he did, he would shield her from Cedric's anger by keeping so great a secret. And yet it almost seemed as if the young lord knew of her desperate act; 'twas written on his face, she saw the pain upon it; and yet, how could it be? These thoughts flashed through Katherine's brain, and she tried to move from him, but an inscrutable presence held her, and she felt she must not leave him, perhaps forever, with that face so full of pain, and she spoke out a word she had never used before and one which touched his Lordship as nothing else could, 'twas:

"Cedric." He caught his breath with sheer excess of joy, and bent again and whispered,—

"What, Kate; what is it?" 'Twas enough, she laughed quietly and turned to Sir Julian, who had come to her side. Lady Constance was not long in finding an opportunity to speak alone with her.

"Oh, sweet," she said. "I haven't had a chance to talk with thee of my adventure," and she drew the maid aside and began volubly to speak of her encounter of the early morning. "He was most certainly of the Court. I cannot possibly mistake his manner. Indeed, I am certain he is a noble lord, and no doubt is here to bear Cantemir escort—perhaps—" and she leant close to Katherine—"it might be the King himself, who knows?" Her listener flushed and thought—

"Was it possible she was to receive such honour, and why not?" She had heard from Constance and Cantemir himself that his house was a very wealthy and important one in Russia and that the English royalty and nobles made much of him. She, with her poor knowledge of the world, thought Constance spoke truth.

"I'll tell thee why I thought he was the King. He was the form, grace and elegance of his Royal Highness and kept his masque securely tied. I'm sure it was he. And this evening,—ah, ah, how can I ever tell thee, Katherine, the honour I felt! Indeed we do not know how important Adrian is until we see those with whom he consorts. To-night I met—who dost guess it was, Katherine?"

"Nay, I could never guess, for I know not whom Adrian's friends are; but if thy friend of the morning was the King, 'tis certain the setting sun brings thee one less titled."

"'Tis so, but one who may be a King. Thou wilt never tell, Katherine?"

"Nay, never."

"'Twas the King's son, his Grace the Duke of Monmouth."

"Ah, ah, a Prince! Thou art indeed favoured. And how came it about? I am very curious." Lady Constance related part of her interview with the Duke, embellished and with many deviations —

"He said they were to be at the monastery as witnesses and intimated that the King had heard of thy wonderful beauty and grew so impatient to see thee he must either come himself or send some one he could trust. Monmouth said thy request was already granted in the King's mind, and he only waited to see thee to give it utterance. Thou dost know what a good Catholic he is, and hearing they were to send thee to ask certain things of his clemency, he has sent the Duke with other special guard to render speed and safety to thy journey to Whitehall, where great honour will be shown Adrian's fair bride." Constance so entered into the very soul of her lies, she half believed them as she gave them utterance.

The young maid was well-nigh beside herself with pleasure at the honours that were to attend her, and she gave up all idea of a backward step. And when Constance proclaimed she was to ac-

company her, her heart leapt up with joy. She gave no place to doubt now, 'twas an unknown quantity, and her voice trembled as she said —

"It makes me perfectly content, if thou art to accompany me. Thou wilt go with me to the monastery, Constance?" For once her ladyship answered truthfully, but she did not know it:

"Nay, I am to join thee some time after twelve; I know not just when or where; but we are to be together. I owe this especial favour to the Duke. I am so glad thou art espoused, or will be in a short while, or I should be insanely jealous. Look, Katherine!" and Constance under cover of her handkerchief showed the ring.

"Isn't it beautiful?" said Katherine.

Mistress Penwick, like many another of her beauty and age, was inclined to be of ill-spirit when another of her sex seemed to be in favour; and at Constance' sudden acquaintance with the King's son, and able to wear his ring, she was piqued, and almost wished it was herself instead; for in such intimacy there could be nothing else but a very near and exalted position at Court. The poor child—innocent of all evil, seeing naught in the gaining of Royal favour but the achievement of all that was high, holy, beautiful and perfect—now for a brief moment scorned her own poor estate and fell to envying Constance, and was of a notion not to go at all to

the monastery;—but if she didn't, then her religion would suffer; for who could go to the King in her place? She knew she was beautiful, and knew its influence, and was sure the King would not refuse her. Now if Lord Cedric had not forbidden her going to the monastery for confession, she could have known what they wished and gone openly with Lady Constance or Sir Julian, or perhaps just with Janet to his Majesty and gained his favour and at once have become a Lady of Honour. But no, 'twas not thus, and things were as they were, and she could not change them or retrace.

She would not engage in any game, but played upon the harpsichord and sung some of her sweetest songs; Lord Cedric ever coming to her side to turn her music or offer some little service. He was aflame with hope, for had she not called him "Cedric"?

How dear it sounded; if he might only hear her say it again. He came to her side and whispered, —

"'Twas sweet of thee to call me Cedric!"—His hand for a moment rested upon the violets at her shoulder,—"Kate, why didst thou not wear the opal shoulder-knot instead of these violets?"

"Because—I value it more than aught else, and I would not wear it on all occasions, for 'twas thy mother's choicest brooch."

"Indeed, I love it, also, Kate, for the same

reason; but I would rather see thee wear it, for I love thee, Kate, thee, thee, thee." His voice was like a sob stirring her to a pity that made her sick and weak, and she turned from him hastily and began singing softly, —

"'When love with unconfined wings hovers within my gates;
And my divine Althea brings to whisper at the grates;
When I lie tangled in her hair and fetter'd to her eye;
The gods that wanton in the air, know no such liberty.

"'Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take that for an hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love, and in my soul am free;
Angels alone that soar above enjoy such liberty!'"

"Thou dost sing the words of the beautiful and amiable Richard Lovelace; I have heard my father speak of him with great affection. The lines to Althea—his sweetheart—were written in prison. She thought him dead and married some one else. He loved her more than life,—dost believe in such love, Kate?"

"Aye, why not?—Ah, Sir Julian, hast finished, —who was victor?"

"I am modest, my Lady."

"But never too modest to hold thine own." As she spoke thus to Sir Julian, the sands of the hour-glass ran out and nine tolled from the Chapel belfry. Before the bell had ceased, Constance had drawn Cedric and Julian into a game of cards, she placing herself opposite the window,

and Katherine had stepped into an adjoining passage, and taking up her camelot cloak, with flying feet and beating heart hastened to the postern-door and slipped bolts and bars and stood without in the calm, warm night.

CHAPTER XIV

SERMONS NEW AND OLD

"THE reign of Charles the Second seemed to be impregnated with a free and easy moral atmosphere that engendered lewdness in human product. It is said by a great historian that Thomas Hobbes had, in language more precise and luminous than has ever been employed by any other metaphysical writer, maintained that the will of the prince was the standard of right and wrong, and that every subject ought to be ready to profess Popery, Mahometanism, or Paganism, at the royal command. Thousands who were incompetent to appreciate what was really valuable in his speculations eagerly welcomed a theory which, while it exalted the kingly office, relaxed the obligations of morality and degraded religion into a mere affair of state. Hobbism soon became an almost essential part of the character of the fine gentleman. All the lighter kinds of literature were deeply tainted by the prevailing licentiousness. Poetry stooped to be the pander of every low desire. Ridicule, instead of putting guilt and error to the blush, turned her formidable shafts against innocence and truth. The restored Church contended indeed against the pre-

vailing immorality, but contended feebly, and with half a heart. It was necessary to the decorum of her character that she should admonish her erring children, but her admonitions were given in a somewhat perfunctory manner. Her attention was elsewhere engaged. Little as the men of mirth and fashion were disposed to shape their lives according to her precepts, they were yet ready to fight for her cathedrals and places, for every line of her rubric and every thread of her vestments. If the debauched cavalier haunted brothels and gambling houses, he at least avoided conventicles. If he never spoke without uttering ribaldry and blasphemy, he made some amends by his eagerness to send Baxter and Howe to gaol for preaching and praying. Thus the clergy, for a time, made war on schism with so much vigour that they had little leisure to make war on vice."

"Charles the Second wished merely to be a King who could draw without limit on the treasury for the gratification of his private tastes, who could hire with wealth and honours persons capable of assisting him to kill the time, and who, even when the state was brought by maladministration to the depths of humiliation and to the brink of ruin, could still exclude unwelcome truth from the purlieus of his own seraglio, and refuse to see and hear whatever might disturb his luxurious repose. Later in life, the ill-bred

familiarity of the Scottish divines had given him a distaste for Presbyterian discipline, while the heats and animosities between the members of the Established Church and the Nonconformists, with which his reign commenced, made him think indifferently of both. His religion was that of a young prince in his warm blood, whose inquiries were applied more to discover arguments against belief than in its favour."

"The wits about the Court, who found employment in laughing at Scripture, delighted in turning to ridicule what the preachers said in their sermons before him, and in this way induced him to look upon the clergy as a body of men who had compounded a religion for their own advantage. So strongly did this feeling take root in him that he at length resigned himself to sleep at sermon-time—not even South or Barrow having the art to keep him awake. In one of these half-hours of sleep, when in Chapel, he is known to have missed, doubtless with regret, the gentle reproof of South to Lauderdale during a general somnolency:—'My lord, my lord, you snore so loud you will wake the King.'"

"He was altogether in favour of extempore preaching, and was unwilling to listen to the delivery of a written sermon." (Indeed, if we had more people like him in this day, we would hear far more of the gospel and far less of politics and jokes which so demoralize the pulpit and

take away all sacredness. The King was right, as all mankind will agree, in his idea of preaching.) "Patrick excused himself from a chaplaincy, 'finding it very difficult to get a sermon without book.' On one occasion the King asked the famous Stillingfleet 'how it was that he always reads his sermons before him, when he was informed that he always preached without book elsewhere?' Stillingfleet answered something about the awe of so noble a congregation, the presence of so great and wise a prince, with which the King himself was very well contented,—'But, pray,' continued Stillingfleet, 'will your Majesty give me leave to ask you a question? Why do you read your speeches when you can have none of the same reasons?' 'Why truly, doctor,' replied the King, 'your question is a very pertinent one, and so will be my answer. I have asked the two Houses so often and for so much money, that I am ashamed to look them in the face.'"

"This 'slothful way of preaching,' for so the King called it, had arisen during the civil wars; and Monmouth, when Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, in compliance with the order of the King, directed a letter to the University that the practice of reading sermons should be wholly laid aside."

There was much ignorance in the seventeenth century; but 'twas of the people's own choos-

ing; 'twas not of necessity. Lewdness was preferable to purity; it was easier had. And when the King led the pace, why not they of lesser rank and fortunes? But was there ever a thing created in all the world without its right and wrong sides? It seemed there was no room in Charles' time for aught but evil. "The ribaldry of Etherege and Wycherley was, in the presence and under the special sanction of the head of the church, while the author of the Pilgrim's Progress languished in a dungeon for the crime of proclaiming the gospel to the poor."

As time waxed, even the vigilant persecutors became passive, relaxed themselves into indifference; but before immorality was aware the still, small voice was heard. The seed that was twelve years in planting had taken root and Pilgrim's Progress became known and John Bunyan stood without the prison gates to preach and pray at will, to keep on extending that influence that lives to-day. And for once the King did not go to sleep when, through caprice or curiosity, he went to hear him preach.

"When Bunyan went to preach in London, if there was but one day's notice, the meeting house was crowded to overflowing. Twelve hundred people would be found collected before seven o'clock on a dark winter's morning to hear a lecture from him. In Zoar St. Southwark, his church was sometimes so crowded that he had

to be lifted to the pulpit stairs over the congregation's heads." He strove not for popularity, as could be seen in the one little circumstance when "a friend complimented him, after service, on 'the sweet sermon' which he had delivered. 'You need not remind me of that,' he said. 'The devil told me of it before I was out of the pulpit.'"

"Charles Doe, a distinguished nonconformist, visited him in his confinement. 'When I was there,' he writes, 'there were about sixty dissenters besides himself, taken but a little before at a religious meeting at Kaistor, in the county of Bedford, besides two eminent dissenting ministers, Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Dun, by which means the prison was much crowded. Yet, in the midst of all that hurry, I heard Mr. Bunyan both preach and pray with that mighty spirit of faith and plerophory of Divine assistance, that he made me stand and wonder.'"

The sweet spirit of a minister is treasured and kept green in the memory of his flock, no matter how recalcitrant they may be. This is shown by the reading once a year in Bedford Church of John Gifford's letter to his parish people, written over two hundred years ago. It says: "Let no respect of persons be in your comings together. When you are met as a church, there's neither rich nor poor, bond nor free, in Jesus Christ. 'Tis not a good practice to be offering

places or seats when those who are rich come in; especially it is a great evil to take notice of such in time of prayer or the word; then are bowings and civil observances at such times not of God." It was the "holy Mr. Gifford" that was often in conference with John Bunyan; "the latter as the seeking pilgrim, the former the guiding evangelist." With such men as these the sweet spirit was kept aflame and eventually changed England and made her the great country she is. But in those licentious days this sweet spirit shone from its impure surroundings like the *ignis fatuus*, and 'twas a great, wicked world that Mistress Penwick stood all alone in that early summer night.

A nightingale sung afar in some bowery of blossom, and for a moment she listened.

"'Tis an ode to the night he sings, 'tis too clear and high and full of cadence for a nuptial mass, —nay, nay, I shall not marry to-night, I will go and see what dear father Constantine wishes and return to this home that has never seemed so fair to me before;—and my lord is handsome and so, too, is Sir Julian and I'm fond of their Graces of Ellswold and Janet,—Janet, I love her best of all. Nay, nay, I'll not be married. I will go and see and return. Janet will not look for me above stair before eleven at least. I shall be home again ere I'm missed." She thought thus as she hurried on through the courtyard and beyond, where waited Father Dempsy.

In a second, it seemed, they were galloping away, Mistress Penwick throwing back a long, sweeping glance at the great, stone pile behind her. The train of her brocade skirt hung almost to the ground; her fair, sloping shoulders, her exquisite face framed in a high roll of amber beauty, made a picture,—a rare gem encircled by a gorgeous June night.

On they rode without converse; Dempsy was a brave man, yet he feared and justly, too, that Mistress Penwick might be taken from him before they reached the monastery, therefore he enjoined silence, and the best speed of their horses, and kept a hand upon his sword.

He drew a sigh of relief when he beheld the dark outline of the cloister that appeared quiet and undisturbed.

As they approached, Cantemir came from the open door and lifted Mistress Penwick from her horse in a most tender fashion, and would have held her close and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead had she not drawn from him and raised her hand to his lips.

"'Tis a cold greeting, Katherine, after these long, weary days of separation."

"Nay, not so. 'Tis thy warmth that is premature." And without deigning further opportunity for converse, she swept over the threshold of the monastery.

There was much business to be attended to be-

fore the ceremony could take place, and the time was limited; for in one hour it was believed the cloister would be attacked by the Duke of Buckingham and his party, and the maid must be far on her way before the attack.

There was none but Mistress Penwick, herself, that thought else than that a marriage contract was to be sealed. She on a sudden felt a great repulsion for Adrian Cantemir, and she resolved not to wed him.

As she stood in the large hall that served as council chamber and for all functions of importance, she cast her eye about for those answering to the description of his Grace of Monmouth and that other—was it the King? She felt sure she would know him; but upon the long benches there were none but sombre cowled figures with crucifix and—aye, swords gleamed from beneath the folds of their long gowns and touched the floor. Her eyes flashed wide with surprise, and she felt proud and loved the bravery of her religion. But to what it portended she thought on for a moment seriously and concluded Royal personages must be present, or why else such precaution?

As the business had to do with Mistress Penwick only, Cantemir was asked to withdraw. As soon as the business was entered upon, the maid's doubts of the surrounding company were dispelled and she knew none of the Royal party

would dare be even an unknown guest at such a meeting.

At the conclusion of the council she held an important secret, more important to herself than she dreamt. It made her bold, and she straightway arose and spoke out clearly,—

"If the reverend fathers would agree upon a certain matter, I will start at once upon my journey. I feel my mission to the King to be more important than all else to me, and for the success of my undertaking I deem it best I should go as maid and not wife to his most Royal presence." This was a startling but most acceptable assertion. It had been much spoken on by the Abbés but by common consent they agreed if the maid wished to marry the Russian, why—they would offer no objections; so they had left the matter.

"Dost think, Mistress Penwick, thou canst settle readily the case with the Count?"

"'Twill be easy and quickly done. Call him hither!" said she. The Russian came with eagerness and some impatience, for he feared a delay might plunge him into a lively skirmish.

Katherine went to his side, and placing her fingers upon his arm, said,—

"Thou wilt escort me to the King?"

"Most gladly, and where else in life thou shalt choose to go."

"'Tis the present that indicates the future,—wilt come at once without ceremony?"

"Nay, nay, I protest. I must have thee as wife, first, Mistress Penwick!"

Constantine leant toward them from the table and looked with purpose, a frown emphasizing his shrewd glance,—

"We have not time for further controversy, and if the maid will say the word, the ceremony will be performed now." The Abbé knew the maid would give in to circumstances sooner than the determined Count, and thus hastened her. All eyes were upon the two, and Katherine hearing in the priest's voice a tone of insistence, stood for a moment motionless and evidently debating her course.

As she opened her lips, there was a sudden sound of horses' feet.

In a moment a thundering knock upon the door's panelling demanded admittance.

"Who seeks an opening so roughly?" thundered La Fosse.

"Cedric of Crandlemar!"

"The devil!" cried Cantemir, as he fell back in consternation and fear. Indeed he would rather meet the King of devils than this hot-headed Cedric. Katherine was not at a loss to read Count Adrian's countenance, and straightway bade them open the door. La Fosse spoke as his hand rested on the locker,—

"Art alone, my lord?"

"Aye, quite alone!" came in a voice so shaken

Katherine fell to trembling in very fear. Cedric threw wide the door and stood within, facing them all. His face gleamed like marble, so colourless and still it seemed. His body swayed by love and anger, knew not which way to turn, but appeared to sway from side to side. His breath came in quick, sharp pants. His hair, damp as if from fine rain, was dishevelled. His dark eyes shot forth sparks of angry fire that burnt all who fell beneath their glance.

"Who brought hither the maid? Did yonder pandering fool? Aye, 'twas thou. I see it plain. Come, come, draw fool; draw ere I run thee through and dishonour sword by attacking thee, unarmed; draw, I say, fool!"

Count Adrian's face was ghastly. Lord Cedric raised his sword and made a lunge at him. La Fosse was too quick for Cedric. He sprang between and parried the pass with astounding dexterity. The monk intended it for a finale stroke; but not so Cedric. He began a fight that was not to be so easily ended, and he drove his sword in fury. The good monk only wished to parry; but alas! he caught the spirit of battle and fought. Constantine made as if to draw the maid from the scene, while others sought to interfere with the combatants. 'Twas of no avail. Katherine could not be moved from where she stood, white and still as a statue; neither could they interpose between the Abbé

and his Lordship. Sorrow and dismay were written on every face, for 'twas sure one or the other must fall of those two masters of the sword. Already there fell at La Fosse's feet drops of blood. When Katherine saw them, she sprang forward and cried,—

"Stop, stop in God's name, stop!" As she was about to fling herself between them, Cedric fell heavily to the floor, a stream of blood flowing from his breast. With a wild scream Katherine fell upon her knees at his side and pressed her dainty handkerchief to the wound, and began to fondle him and speak in his ear that she loved him. Aye, she was sure now, there could be no doubt, and as she pressed her lips to his cold, white face she saw his eyelids flutter. She looked up quickly into the priest's face; he answered her look with wholesome words.

"The wound is slight, my child; he will recover." She fell back, blushing with shame for her bold avowals, and knew not which way to turn to hide her confusion; for she was sure all present had marked her warm words and actions.

Immediately Lord Cedric was carried to an inner room, and Katherine turned about to look for Cantemir, as did a half-dozen others; he had disappeared and where he stood were a score of masqued figures. When they saw they had the attention of the company, one lifted high his sword and cried,—

"Hail, merry monarchs of the Sylvan Chapel! We have come to escort the maid to the King!" While this avowal struck the Abbés with consternation, they had expected a different mode of attack, and they were not displeased that it had taken another course. They had expected the treasure would be demanded of them with all their papers. These they would fight for. The secret for which Mistress Penwick was to visit the King, the Abbés were now sure the Royal party knew not. The papers she carried could give them no clue even though they gained possession of them, and the maid would never divulge what she was to say to his Majesty.

"Her escort is provided," said La Fosse, who stood nearly exhausted, leaning upon the table, his sword still in his hand.

"Ah, but if we choose to offer her a more honourable one! Indeed the knave of a Russian, who lies without, has but just put the matter in our hands. He was to escort her, but at sight of blood he faints and begs us take forthwith his promised wife to Whitehall." One could not mistake the courtly grace and fine figure of his Grace of Buckingham. Behind him was a form equally imposing, and the handsome mouth and chin of the Duke of Monmouth could be seen as he tilted his masque for a better view of the maid, whom he supposed was the same he had met in the evening. But with half an eye he saw his

mistake. Never was he so moved at first sight of a face before. He drank in her loveliness in rapturous drafts, and swayed from side to side examining with critical eye the outline of her fair mould. She had thrown her cloak from her and stood slightly in front of Constantine, as he, holding a candle at her elbow, leant close to her ear, whispering and holding a small paper for her to read. As she read, her eyes flashed, her bosom rose and fell neath the covering of her short, full waist; and Monmouth's eyes seemed ravished by it. It had been his misfortune, he thought, to see long, modish, tapering stays that bruised his fancy as it did the wearer's body, and to behold such slender waist crowned by full, unfettered maiden roundness, pedestalled by such broad and shapely hips was maddening. He had not dreamt of such beauty when his Grace of Buckingham had suggested the trip into the forest.

"We will have some sport finding a beauty and a secret. If it pleases your Grace, I will have the secret and thou the maid," said he to Monmouth, and the latter had come all the way from Whitehall, for he knew the Duke would waste no time looking for aught but a King's portion. Never was there another such a beauty; she would be the gem of his seraglio. She looked up, her dark orbs casting a sweeping glance upon those about.

"I will return to Crandlemar for the night; call my escort!" said she.

Now it was plain this was a ruse of Constantine's own making, and had whispered it as she had pretended to read. Buckingham laughed cruelly and scornfully, provoking smothered mirth from behind the masques of his followers.

"Thou hadst better set out directly, if thou wouldst gain audience with the King ere he leaves Whitehall."

"I am in no hurry, to-morrow will do as well. I like not advice unsought. I'll have none of it. I will go where, when and how as I please!"

"And coercion smacks of a power residing not in these parts. I am delegated, Mistress Penwick, to bring thee straightway to the Royal presence."

"And why, may I ask, am I so called to his Majesty?"

"Thou art a hostage!" and Buckingham took a pinch of snuff with as much ease and grace as if standing in a crowded drawing-room.

CHAPTER XV

THE EDICT OF BUCKINGHAM

"I—I, a hostage! and who gave me as such, pray?"

"There is not time for further inquisition; we have a long journey before us. Come, Mistress!"

"Nay, nay, I protest; I'll not go with thee—"

"Mistress Penwick, I beg thee in my own behalf,"—and the Duke bowed before her so courteously, he half won her good will, then—"and I command thee in the name of the King," and with these words he put forth his hand as it were to take that of Katherine. A sword swept lightly over the maid's fingers, at which the two Dukes drew back with haughty indignation, which meant that reparation must be immediate for this insult to those who came upon his Majesty's affairs; for indeed they feigned well that they were carrying out the King's orders. La Fosse, having now regained his breath and some strength, essayed to draw Mistress Penwick from the scene that was about to ensue; but a young man flung himself between them and drove back the monk at the point of his sword, thus beginning the fight.

Katherine was well-nigh fainting from actual

fear and apprehension. If she were a hostage, 'twas her duty to go and it might favour her cause. Doubtless these men were gentlemen, and what matter now who accompanied her to the King? Adrian had proven himself a knave. Poor, dear Cedric lay ill of his wound and he could not attend her if he would. These things flashed through her mind as she watched the flash of steel. Then on a sudden it came to her who these masqued figures might be. Her heart gave a great bound, and she sprang into the midst of those fighting and raised her voice, crying forth,—

"Cease, cease, fight no more; I will go with thee." A priest near her whispered,—

"'Tis thy honour we fight for now, hold thy peace; 'tis not best for thee to go with them, 'twould be thy utter ruin and the undoing of our affairs!" His warning came too late; all had heard Katherine speak; and although two forms already lay upon the floor, there were other motives stronger than the thirst for blood, which on a sudden seemed quenched, and faces pale and blood-stained turned upon Buckingham as he coolly and with much dignity lifted Katherine's cloak from the table and placed it about her shoulders, then had the audacity to offer his arm. She ignored it, turned to Constantine and fell upon her knees; he blessed her, then whispered hurriedly in her ear. She arose and passed down

the bloody aisle, which was flanked on either side by an array of shining steel. As she approached the door, it was flung wide by a figure that startled her, so like was it to Lord Cedric's, but the light fell aslant his countenance and as she swept by saw 'twas Sir Julian Pomphrey.

A chaise stood some little distance from the cloister, into which Katherine was placed with great courtesy by his Grace of Buckingham.

She sunk back among the cushions with half-closed eyes; heeding not those that rode at either window of the equipage; she was trying to collect her thoughts and by degrees they shaped themselves and she was thinking of that that had but transpired. First of all, she consoled herself like the selfish girl she was: Cedric would not die; 'twas a sweet consolation, and she smiled; her thoughts dwelling not for a moment on her own conduct that had brought him to suffer such pain. Then she lay back even more luxuriously as she thought that Sir Julian would not have opened the door for her, had she been going into danger. To tell the truth, she sighed happily in contemplation of further exploit. She grew bolder and bolder, fearing naught but some slight mischance that might prevent her being a Maid of Honour; for never, never could she go back to Cedric after she had made assertion of love in his ear, and his eyelids had trembled. Nay, nay, she could not bear to

look him in the face again. Alas! she made vow she never would. If she was not made a lady of her Majesty's household, she would seek the patronage of some titled woman, who could help her. Not for a moment did she think of the perils that surrounded and grew closer about her unprotected self with every turn of the wheels that carried her on.

It appeared now as if all barriers to the King's presence had been levelled and Katherine's hopes matured to confidence. She drew her cloak about her with sedulous care, as if in so doing she wrapped and hid from the whole world her own poor cunning. She found in her lonely condition no embarrassment, conceiving that her position as intermediary between her Church and the State was sufficient reason for her abrupt leaving of home. Sir Julian would doubtless explain matters to the Duke and Duchess, whom she believed were more than half of her faith. They would see she had been highly honoured by being entrusted with a great secret.

It appeared as if the chaise would never cease to lung and swagger over rough, unused roads, and when at last it did mend its way, Katherine had ceased thinking and fallen fast asleep, nor did she wake during hours of travel, until the great coach came to a sudden halt. She looked through the window. Dawn streaked the East with uncertain intention, knowing not whether

to open the day with rain or sunshine. A little to the left was the dark outline of an inn, nestling upon the threshold of a forest, from the window of which fell aslant the way a line of light. The door of the equipage was opened, and a stately cavalier stood to assist her down the step. She leapt lightly to the ground, taking the proffered arm, as the way was dark and uneven.

Within the large, cheery room they entered, burnt a crackling fire; for the morning was damp and chilly. Katherine stole a glance at her companion and saw the handsome features of Monmouth. He had removed his masque and now stood uncovered before her.

"I hope Mistress Penwick has not suffered from her long ride?"

"Nay, sir; on the contrary, I feel refreshed." Her manner told him plainly his address was not displeasing to her. His eyes rested amorously upon her; for 'twas naught but strong, healthful youth could predicate such reply and vouch for its assertion by such rich colouring of cheek, such rare sparkling of eyes and such ripeness of lips.

She sat at the chimney-nook, her satin gown trailing at her side, her cloak thrown over the back of the high chair. Their Graces were engaged aside with the landlord and servants.

"We will rest here until noon, anyway," one

said, "and if they have not arrived we will set out without them." Katherine heard and thought 'twas Constance whom they were expecting; and when a table was drawn close to the fire and covers laid for four, there being but three to sit down, Katherine looked askance at the vacant place; the Dukes exchanged glances and his Grace of Buckingham turned to her quickly, introducing himself, then Monmouth, and explained that at the last moment Lady Constance had been prevailed upon to accompany them to London and was expected every moment.

Mistress Penwick had flushed at the presentation of two such noble names, but at his following assertion, which corroborated with Constance' own words, made her not a little jealous; for the handsome young Monmouth had already shown his regard (God pity her innocence) for Lady Constance by giving her a valuable ring, and now had contrived to make her of their party that he might be constantly with her.

She straightway became very sober-minded, vouchsafing no remarks and inviting none. Her pique would have given way had she but heard the Duke's conversation a few moments previous.

"Damme!" said young Monmouth, "I have kidnapped the wrong girl. 'Tis not my fault; thou saidst, Duke, to take any pretty girl from Crandlemar castle, and I have captured Lady

Constance, whom, I took it, was the girl in question; and I made up my mind thou shouldst not choose beauty for me. I shall throw her on thy shoulders to dispose of."

The Dukes, bent on provoking the maid to her former manner, began witty tales of wayside inns. Their demeanour was so noble, their stories so terse and pretty, their converse of such elegant and pure wording, she relaxed and fell into their mood and told what few convent stories she could boast. Their Graces were charmed by her beauty, her sweet resonant voice and the simple and innocent narratives, and not a little pleased by the result of their diplomacy.

* * * * * *

When Mistress Penwick had gone from the grand salon the evening before, Lord Cedric was not long in discovering her absence; for his eyes and thoughts ever sought her. He had been greatly stirred by some unknown thing, perhaps that we call premonition ('tis God's own gift, if we would but heed its warning), but the game being well under way and Constance calling his attention to an immediate and imperative move, he was dissuaded from his inclination to arise and inquire of the maid's absence. It was not for long, however, either the game or his kinswoman's cunning could hold his Lordship from seeking her. Quietly he beckoned a lackey and whis-

pered aside. A few minutes elapsed when the servant stood by his master, while beyond in the doorway was Janet, who for once in her life was quite pale. Swiftly Lord Cedric strode to her, saying,—

"Hast thou looked for her everywhere, Janet?"

"Aye, my lord, in her own chamber and—"

"But perhaps she has gone to the kitchens or pantries, for hunger doth assail her not infrequent and at unusual hours."

There was a bit of bitterness and sarcasm in his voice and he ground his heel as he turned about to give orders. In a moment servants were hunting in every direction throughout the castle. It was soon ascertained she was not within the great house. Cedric grew wild with passion and tore up and down like one gone mad. Sir Julian could not restrain him, a thing that had not happened heretofore. Angel, his old nurse, was called; she bade him ride forth for her.

At this a horse was made ready, and his lordship mounted and rode away, Sir Julian protesting all the while.

As the clatter of horses' hoofs had fairly died away and Sir Julian stood just where Cedric had left him, debating with his several ideas, a soft touch was laid almost tenderly upon his arm; had it been the soft, slimy trailing of a serpent,

'twould not have so startled him. He turned suddenly and caught the slender hand, with no fine affection,—

"I see it all quite plainly, thou art the cruel spider that hath woven a silken mesh for that innocent child, and thou shalt tell me before the sands of the hour-glass mark ten moments of time, where has flown Mistress Penwick,—so speak, speak quickly, Constance!"

His voice and manner brooked no delay, and her ladyship thinking that even now Katherine was Cantemir's wife, spoke out with a semblance of injured dignity that melted under Sir Julian's scathing contempt to silly simpering. The noble character of Sir Julian seemed to silhouette that of her ladyship in all its ugly blackness.

"She is, I presume, by now, the Countess Cantemir—made so by an Abbé at the monastery."

Pomphrey was a-road; the clatter of bit and spur brought a smile to Constance' face, and she cried forth with all the venom in her poor, foul being:

"Two mad fools,—both gone crazy over a convent wench, who is now my Lady Cantemir—my cousin,—the wife of a fortune hunter!" She fled within doors like one pursued and stopped not until she reached her own chamber.

Midnight approached phantom-like, and as stealthily Lady Constance crept to the postern door. Behind her fell a shadow athwart the

floor, a shadow that was not hers but of one that moved as warily. She listened as she held the door ajar, fearing to look back. As she thrust the door wide, a figure from without moved toward her.

"Who is there?" she whispered.

"Monmouth!" was the answer; and out she stepped, well pleased to be free from that shadow she felt was pursuing her. Her hand was immediately taken and eager eyes sought the ring. It was hardly visible, so dense was the shadow of the trees.

"Come this way, Lady Penwick," came in a voice that was not that of Monmouth's, which had sounded so much like music to her a few, short hours before, or that had spoken the word "Monmouth" even that moment. She, drawing back in her uncertainty, was captured by strong arms, a hood was thrown over her head, and she was lifted and carried in hot haste to a chaise, and helped therein without much formality. As her escort leapt in behind her, there swept in the other door another figure, also intent upon being accommodated by a seat in a London equipage; and before any one was aware of a *de trop* comrade, the doors were shut with a bang and horses started at a gallop. Under cover of the noise her ladyship's vizor was lifted and she, half smothered, drew breath and stared about her in the darkness.

"Thou didst bring thy servant with thee, Lady?"

"Who doth dare inveigle me from the protection of my cousin, Lord Cedric?"

"I, my lady; a simple gentleman of his Grace of Monmouth's suite,—and at his order."

"Ah—" 'twas long drawn and somewhat smacked of satisfaction. "Who is this female?"

"Is she not thine?"

"Nay, not mine. She doth play the hocus," said her ladyship.

"Who art thou, then, woman; how came yonder door to pamper thy whim?" The surprised guardsman rapped smartly upon the window, then pulling it up leant out and asked for a torch. As there were none a-light, he waited some moments; as he did so, there came an answer from the figure opposite, —

"I am Mistress Penwick's waiting-woman." The answer was satisfactory to the guard.

"'Tis Janet, as I live," interrupted Lady Constance. She was not sorry to have a companion of her own sex, and Janet would make herself generally useful, if the ride was long and her ladyship should fall ill, as she was certain to do. She knew also Janet's motive for following her. She was interested in nothing but her mistress.

As the road seemed rough and endless, Constance became anxious of her destination and began to inquire, as if in great anger, why she was

thus taken and for what purpose. All questions being answered perfunctorily, she relaxed into silence. At last she asked broadly,—

"Where are we to stop for refreshment, man; I am near dead with fatigue?"

"We stop at Hornby's Inn, my lady, there to meet his Grace."

Janet sat quiet, nor did she speak again until she stood before Mistress Penwick at the inn, where she sailed in as if nothing in the world had happened, but inwardly she fairly wept with joy to find her nurseling happy and unharmed.

The rain was falling heavily as Lady Constance entered the room where sat Katherine with the two Dukes. Dawn seemed to have gone back into night, for 'twas so dark candles twinkled brightly and lighted up the maiden's face as she spun a story of convent ghosts. Hate flung open gates through her ladyship's eyes and fell a battery upon Katherine's face. 'Twas but a thrust of a glance, but their Graces noted it as they arose to greet her. Katherine was answering in an undertone Janet's questions as Monmouth spoke aside to her Ladyship. Constance was not to be delayed, even by his Grace, and she hastened to the table and greeted Katherine as Lady Cantemir.

"Nay, not so!" said the maid; whereupon Constance gasped, covering her defeat by a great show of wonder and surprise. She fell to ques-

tioning, her inquiries being overthrown by Buckingham, who adroitly turned the conversation upon another matter.

Monmouth was wild with delight over the prize he had captured, and as they sat at meat he was pondering upon where he should hide the beauty, for he feared his father's predilections, and 'twas sure he would not run the risk of any such mischance and he tossed about in his mind the advisability of taking her to London. As these thoughts crowded upon him he grew grave and frowned. Constance, feeling her disappointment most keenly, saw the tangle upon the Duke's brow. It arrested the quick pulsing of her own discontent and turned her mind into a channel of evil even more treacherous than any ideas that had assailed her heretofore. It meant, in case of defeat, her own downfall. She would barter, if need be, her own soul away. Of such character were her ladyship's ambitions. She was impatient for the final bout that was to settle all things.

Even the haughty Duke of Buckingham was moved by Mistress Penwick's youth, beauty and innocence. And yet he thought 'twas pitiful she should go unclaimed by Court. Her secret must be had at whatever cost, and seeing the maid was neither dismayed nor at loss by being thrown with the king's son and the famous Buckingham, 'twas certain nothing less than extreme measures

would draw from her her secret. Whether these measures were foul or fair was not of much consequence to him. If the maid was to favour any, he would withdraw, giving place to Monmouth, providing of course 'twas in his power to do so. And that 'twould be his power he did not doubt.

Mistress Penwick saw Monmouth's frown also, and looked up at him smiling and asked,—

"Thou must not ponder upon ghosts.—When do we journey, your Grace?"

"When thou art well rested and say the word." His face broke into sunshine and the maid could not fail to see the admiration that fell upon her from his Grace's eyes. She flushed rose red. He caught her hand as they arose from table, and pressed it warmly, and with a tenderness that was apparent to Buckingham and Constance. Should he press his suit upon her now or wait? He thought best to wait, as Janet quickly came to her mistress at a motion of the hand that the Duke reluctantly released. He allowed her to pass to her chamber without his escort. Constance passed unnoticed by him from the room, and being well-worn by her long ride, also went above stair, where she tumbled upon her bed in tears, most unlike Katherine who was rubbed and swathed in blankets by the faithful Janet.

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Sir Julian Pomphrey had sent to the castle and

procured conveyance and Ellswold's physicians for the young lord, who lay very white and weak at the monastery. Owing to his serious wound, they had moved very slowly, reaching home near three o'clock in the morning. The Duchess was greatly shocked by Cedric's condition and most indignant with Mistress Penwick and Constance.

The matter was blown about by servants, and before the dismal rainy day was ended, all Crandlemar knew of the goings-on at the castle and were greatly stirred that their lord had been so used by the Catholics. 'Twas inflammable matter that meant the possible uprising in arms of the whole village. It was said the Protestants were aggrieved that Lord Cedric had thus long allowed the monks freehold, and now that he was helpless they would take it upon themselves to drive them away at the point of the sword and see if, by so doing, greater fortune would not fall to them, for such bravery would certainly bring them to their lord's notice and mayhap he would build up many of his houses and do better by them than heretofore.

Over the ale mugs at the village inn 'twas whispered by the landlord that the day before two men, wearing masques, had left the place together, one bearing under his saddle-bag a monk's robe; and a crucifix had fallen from his pocket as he mounted.

The men grew more and more excited and fell

to pledging themselves to clean out the ancient monastery before another day should close.

A pale young man in fashionable attire sat apart, drinking deep and listening with satisfaction to the village swains and their elders' talk; his eye in imagination upon the dark passage in the monastery that hid the trapdoor and—no doubt the treasures of the cloister that lay beneath.

'Twas Cantemir; he had escaped unharmed from the clutches of Buckingham and Monmouth. The former had caught him hastening from the monastery and seizing compelled him to give the information he sought and to give up all papers on his person; which he did cheerfully. Finding him a cowardly knave, the Duke flung him from him with disgust. Buckingham had heard, to be sure, that the maid they sought was a hostage; but whether this was true, or would lead to matters of more consequence, he had yet to learn.

Buckingham, after a few hours' sleep, left Hornby's Inn, returning to the village of Crandlemar. He wore no masque this time and boldly entered the inn to refresh himself and prepare for a visit to the castle. He took little heed of the slender young man who now lay, very much drunken, upon a long bench; but ordered the best wine and sat down before a table that was already accommodating some half-dozen men.

He appeared not to hear their excited whispers, and feigned preoccupation until he was quite sure his manner had been noted, then as if modesty held him, he spoke,—

"Is there not in these parts a monastery upon the estates of the noble Lord Cedric of Crandlemar?" He hardly raised his eyes, so indifferently did he put the question.

"There is, sir," one said.

"Then where hath flown my lord's religion?"

This struck consternation upon the group; for 'twas certain they loved their patron's good name, even though he did forget their importunities, and this sudden thrust struck home. One whispered aside,—

"Perhaps 'tis one come to spy upon our lord's intentions and take him to the Tower." At this one honest, brave man arose and leant with rustic grace across the table toward the stranger and said,—

"His lordship lies ill yonder," pointing over his shoulder toward the castle, "and we loyal subjects to his Majesty, claim the right to drive from Protestant soil the shackles of Catholic freeholds, and 'tis our intention to come upon them —what say you, fellows, to-night?"

"Aye, aye!" rang from nearly a score of tongues.

"'Tis well," said the cavalier, "for to-morrow might have been too late."

"What might that mean, sir?"

"It means that Catholic lands and holds are sometimes confiscated and in some cases the boundary lines are not known, and some good King might send some noble lord to the Tower to search for the required limitations of his demesne."

Every man's hand sought a weapon and eye met eye in mutual concourse.

"To-night, then, to-night we'll put to rout the enemy!" they cried.

The cavalier, pleased with the reception of his hint, asked for his horse.

He arrived at the castle to be most cordially received by the Duchess and Sir Julian. If Buckingham was ever unbending, it was to Sir Julian.

As they met, Buckingham bent lower than his wont to hide a guilt that was not perceptible to any one else but Julian, and the latter was not slow to note it. The Duchess, not knowing who had carried off either Constance or Mistress Penwick, was very free in her conversation and spoke at once of Lord Cedric's injury and of the naughty beauty that had driven him to it. Buckingham's countenance was changed by the assumed expression of either surprise or regret, as was necessary and suited.

Upon his arrival he was not allowed to see either the Duke or Cedric, and as his business

called for a speedy return to London, he must leave early after supper, adding that he regretted the importunity of the hour, as it detained the king's business with his Grace of Ellswold.

This of course changed the physicians' minds, and Buckingham was allowed to have converse with the Duke and finished that he came to do at the castle.

But Sir Julian had somewhat to say, and ordered his horse to accompany the Duke on his return journey.

This was not unlooked for, and Buckingham, fearing no *imbroglio*, intended to hasten Sir Julian's speech, as there was no time to spare. They started forth 'neath the dripping trees.

"Where is Mistress Penwick, George?"

"With her nurse, Julian."

"And where the nurse?"

"At Hornby's."

'Where is Monmouth's place of hiding her?"

"That is more, I dare say, Julian, than he knows himself."

"How long will they remain at the inn?"

"Until I return."

"Then ——?"

"Then, London way is my desire, and I doubt not 'tis Monmouth's also."

"Dost love me, Duke?"

"Aye, as always. What is thy desire?"

"Canst thou keep the maid safe for thirty-six

hours?" For a moment there was no answer; then calmly and cold came the word "No."

"By God! is it so bad that you, you George, cannot take care of her?"

"'Tis the worst of all!"

"Is she safe then now—now?"

"If the eye of the nurse doth not perjure its owner, I would say she was safe for all time."

"Good——"

"But, Pomphrey, one would wonder at thy devotion to Cedric?"

"I loved him, first."

"That does not say thou lovest thy second love better, eh?"

"By heaven, I love her, there—thou hast it." Buckingham gave vent to his natural inclination and laughed boldly.

"Then, follow her. We may presume she will be safe kept 'til London gives her rest and wine and finds a locker for her nurse."

"Then my errand is finished. I will bid thee *adieu*."

CHAPTER XVI

BUCKINGHAM'S ADVENTURE

BUCKINGHAM, returning to the village, where his escort met him, then went to a small unused cabin in the thick woods beyond. Here he changed his attire, making ready for a quick journey and one fraught with some adventure.

As he donned his clothes, ever and anon he paused to hear the low murmuring of voices that came up from the village. 'Twas evident the mob was gathering.

An hour he waited impatiently, when his servant entered, saying that the mob had started and were hurrying along the high-road at great speed.

The Duke mounted and rode after them, quite far enough in the rear for them not to hear his horse's step or see as he passed where some cottage light fell aslant the road.

By the time they came in sight of the monastery, he was exasperated beyond measure to be so held behind and was in no mood to wait the mob's leisure. He leapt from his horse and threw rein to his man.

No light was to be seen. It appeared the monks had either deserted their dwelling or for-

tified it by fastening with boards the windows and doors. The latter was the case. The besiegers with all sorts of sticks, stones and bludgeons began at once to bombard the building that stood dark and seemingly impregnable. Buckingham stood some distance from them, as if indeed he were of different mould and could not mingle with their steaming, smoking, foul-smelling bodies, that reeked of gin and poor tobacco. He waited only for an entrance to be made, that he might pass in without the labour of making an opening for himself. Indeed, his arm, unused to such rough strength, would become unfit to handle the sword of a gentleman.

He was leant upon one knee behind a strip of iris that bordered a forest path, when suddenly he heard the crash of glass and heard a triumphant yell from the mob. He sprang from his hiding and crept toward the place. A window had been broken in and the fight had already begun. The monks were well equipped for battle with weapon, strength and stout hearts and a good stone wall for shelter, but their numbers were weak.

The siege was destined to be a long and bloody one, unless the ponderous door could be broken, for the mob could not enter fast enough through the small casement. Should this be done, it was evident the monks would be obliged to either take flight, surrender or be foully murdered.

Buckingham could not enter the window without taking part in the fight, and mayhap run a great risk to his person.

He was not long in discovering, however, that the doorway was being bombarded successfully, and soon the massive door must succumb.

At last there was a thundering crash, and broken oak panels flew through the air.

The men rushed in. Buckingham in a moment was in their midst and fighting his way through them. He flung himself aside and escaped the fighting mass by a small door that led him to a passage, where he regained his breath and looked out for his bearings.

He found his way through many winding passages to the panel. This he opened and quickly strode through to the trapdoor, which stood agape. From beneath came the sound of voices. He knelt and looked down. There was no light to guide him. Cautiously he descended the ladder, finding his way warily toward the place where he had seen the chest and whence now came the voices. One was saying:

"It's gone, the damn knaves have secreted it; we must have a light, Anson, or the horde above stair will be upon us, and all the fires of hell could hardly show us out of this dungeon." Whereupon the flint was struck and the forms of three men were dimly outlined.

They began running about nervously in dif-

ferent directions to find the chest; his Grace keeping from view by following in their shadow. Back they went again to the spot where it had stood, and as the light fell full in their faces Buckingham recognized the pale, chiselled countenance of Cantemir. There were two servants with him, which, judging from their eagerness, evidently expected perquisites.

The sound above stairs was growing more and more noisome, as if the monks were being pressed back in the direction of the secret passage. 'Twas evident the Abbés intended this move; for unless there was egress 'twould be a veritable slaughter hole and from the first they had kept together, preferring the direction of retreat.

Suddenly one of the men in front of Buckingham leant down and traced with his finger on the dusty stone,—

"They have moved it in this direction, and there is no mistaking it," and he pointed from the ladder.

They followed the direction, holding the light low, and came at once upon what appeared to be a solid stone wall. Inadvertently the man bearing the lighted taper rested his arm for a moment against the stones. Instantly a blaze flared up and showed a very cleverly concocted wall. A canvas had been padded in shape of unhewn stone and painted in imitation; the oil in the paint had ignited and despoiled the illusion.

The blaze was quenched in a moment, the canvas door pried open and the three men passed beyond, carefully closing the door behind them.

Buckingham was close upon them.

They fled rapidly along, Cantemir following his servants and ever glancing behind with eyes staring with fear.

Buckingham was not to be caught by fear-staring eyes and kept well in shadow.

The passage was narrow with many windings and appeared to be interminable.

The men began to run, which was very incautious under the circumstances, for in a moment they were precipitated into a small chamber occupied by two stalwart monks. The latter had barely time to throw themselves upon the defensive ere they were attacked.

Cantemir had the advantage, as the monks were encumbered with their long robes.

Then ensued a short fight, in which Cantemir's men won the day—he remaining well in the background.

One of the servants was wounded and lay helpless upon the floor, his head falling against some object that held him in a semi-upright posture. Cantemir turned with the torch he had taken from the floor, and looked about him, stumbling over the prostrate bodies of the monks as they lay wounded. Noting his injured servant's position, he ran to him, and seeing the

thing upon which his head rested, kicked his body from the chest, as if the fellow had been his enemy's dog, instead of his own serving man.

With a cudgel he and his comrade opened the chest, after first finding it too heavy to carry at speed and for an indefinite distance.

Cantemir's eyes waxed big with greed and delight, as he looked within. He spread out his long fingers, as if to grasp all the chest contained.

"These small caskets must be filled with jewels. Anson, fasten the torch somehow and put these in the bags. Here are some rare laces, looted from some dead Crœsus, I warrant,—put those in too;—those infernal papers—they can be of no consequence——"

"Then I will take them, my lord," said the servant. Cantemir eyed him with no fondness and slipped the papers within his own bag.

Buckingham, watching them from his little cove in the rocks, caught a sound that made him start. It was very distant and indistinct, yet he was quite certain some one was coming, and without further delay he cried out and drew his sword upon the man nearest him, which happened to be Anson.

The fellow used his sword fairly, but no match for his adversary.

Buckingham run him through before the Russian had regained his presence of mind.

As the unfortunate Anson fell, the Duke

turned to Cantemir, who was separated from him by two prone figures and the chest. The Count held the advantage and meant to use it by springing ahead into the opening. There was no opportunity for Buckingham to either reach him or head him off. Cantemir had caught up the filled bags and was smiling insolently across at him. Buckingham was exasperated, not by the fellow's triumph, but at his own helplessness to cut him off. But there was no time to be lost; those other sounds were growing nearer.

The Duke made a bound toward the opening. Cantemir, with an exultant laugh, sprung also toward the opening, but his laugh was turned into a yell of fear, as his leg was caught in a death-like grip by the servant he had kicked from the chest.

In an instant Buckingham was upon him and binding his arms tight behind; the poor, cowardly knave begging at every breath for his life. He was completely undone with fright, his heart melted and his knees bent.

"And would it not be thy meed to run thee through also, for serving thy wounded knave with a kick? 'twas inhuman—by God! 'tis a pity it takes a man with a soul to suffer the tortures of hell, for thou wilt never get thy deserts!" He looked down and saw the poor servant's eyes raised to his pleadingly. The Duke drew from his pocket a flask of wine and

gave it to him; then gathered the bags that lay filled by the chest and hurriedly looked at their contents. As he did so the wounded knave feebly raised his voice,—

"I will be killed if I am found here."

"Nay, a gentleman—" and he cast a scornful glance at Cantemir,—"would not kick thee when thou art down; say nothing of our most noble fathers putting to flight what small life thou hast in thee. What is thy name?"

"Christopher," came in weakened tones from his pallid lips.

In another moment the Duke was gone with his looted treasures.

He flew along at a most undignified gait, bearing his pack as a labourer. His shoulders, unused to such burden, grew tired. He began to wonder if the passage would never end. He was growing more exhausted than he cared to own, and beside, he apprehended he was pursued.

At last he felt almost compelled to leave one of the bags behind, and stopped to think which one he should leave. Yet he was a-mind to carry them all if he broke his back; and beside, it was so dark he was unable to tell which was the more important.

As he stood undecided he heard distinctly the fast approach of footsteps. He gathered his strength and bags and flung along, somewhat refreshed by the change of burdens. As he

made a turn, the fresh outside air blew upon him. He grew cautious and moved more slowly, listening now in both directions. He might not be overtaken, but some one might be at the opening of the passage. There was no light or sound beyond, and soon he stood in the deep darkness of the outer night 'neath dripping trees. Warily he stepped, lest some cracking twig exposed his presence.

He ascertained his surrounding was a thicket, and was about to make his way into its labyrinthine density, step by step; for the way was difficult, when there was a tramping of horses' hoofs upon the rain-soaked road that appeared to be in close proximity.

Under cover of the noise he swept hastily and boldly through the briery bushes that were thickly entangled, and was able to make considerable headway whence he had come, when the noise ceased and a peculiar whistle rang out; then there were a few moments of quiet, as if those who signalled were listening for an answer.

There appeared to be a chaise with several outriders, as Buckingham thought, by the tramp of horses' feet, and a creaking of wheels pulling heavily along.

As he gazed anxiously in their direction, a torch was suddenly set a-glow and a horseman rode up with it to the mouth of the subterranean passage. He leant from his steed and examined

the ground closely, noting doubtless the foot-prints that led away from the road and directly to the place where the Duke stood. He turned abruptly back to the group upon the highway and conversed in low tones.

Buckingham was not a little perturbed, for a horseman could with less trouble than it takes to tell it, track and overtake him in a moment's time. He fain would have a few minutes to ease his burden, but his peril was great. There was no doubt but what these men were monks, come to assist their fellows with the chest and convey them to a place of safety.

Indeed, the secret of the chest must be royal, but whether in jewels or papers he did not know, nor was it the time and place to find out. If he only knew in which pack was the bone of contention he would certainly lighten his burden.

Again he lifted the bags and strode on lightly, for he still could be heard to the highway, if one should listen.

He had not gone far, however, when there was a shout from the subterranean opening and much confusion following upon it.

The Duke was now thoroughly aroused. Doubtless the monks within the passage had at that moment arrived at its mouth, there to make known to their comrades the robbery of the chest's contents. They were in pursuit; he could hear the bushes crackling beneath horses' feet.

Never before had the wily Duke felt so hard pressed. He could afford to be taken himself, for he was sure of a release sooner or later; but his whole being revolted at the idea of losing the riches of his burden and above all—the secret, the secret that would make his fortunes thribble, the secret that would make him more powerful than heretofore. The King's favour would be boundless. And George Villiers turned abruptly and—fell into a swollen ravine that was throbbing with its over-filled sides. He straightened himself to his full height and thanked God for the stream, for truly 'twas life-giving water.

He waded in and found it hardly came to his waist in the deepest part. After crossing to its farthest bank, he kept the watery path for nearly a league, thereby throwing his pursuers effectually off the trail. But where his course trended, 'twas impossible to tell, as there was no moon, and the stars were veiled by thick cloud that vomited forth rain in gusts.

The leather bags were very near rain-soaked and had become so heavy 'twas impossible for anything less than a beast of burden to carry them further, so leaving the friendly stream, he walked some little distance from it, gaining to his surprise an open road. This was not what he wished, and was turning from it when he stumbled and fell prone. Being hot with anger and fatigue, he reached for the obstacle that had so

unmanned him to damn it. 'Twas a large, round knot. It struck his memory, as he held it, with a thought of the morning before.

"*Eureka!*" he cried, as he felt the very presence of the tall tree by the public highway that led from Crandlemar, London way. He arose and reached for the aperture.

"Egad, 'tis there!"

Fortunately the royal tree was not far from the unused cabin that had afforded him accommodation some hours before. He immediately sat down upon the bags and rested.

There passed him several horsemen and a chaise; whether they were his whilom companions of the thicket or not he did not care. It was sure they were in haste to leave the village as far behind them as possible.

When the sound of the horses' hoofs had died away, he again donned his leathery burden and made for the depths behind him.

He was not long in reaching the *rendezvous*, and was met by his anxious servant, who had but just arrived from seeking him.

The exhausted Duke gave orders for one hour's rest, then fell upon a pile of blankets that were spread upon the damp and open floor.

An hour later saw the Duke astride his horse, that stood with flaring nostrils, caring not a whit for his extra burden of saddle-bags and flew along the wet road, regardless.

Hours after his master jumped from his back at Hornby's.

The morning was far advanced and Mistress Penwick was fretting under the delay.

Monmouth had plead that the weather was too wet and Lady Constance was too ill to proceed until the following day.

The maid had demurred, saying Janet might remain with her ladyship; but Monmouth was not quite at liberty to take Katherine without first seeing Buckingham, whom he thought should have arrived early in the morning.

As Buckingham came into the great room of the inn, Katherine proposed they set out at once, as she would reach Whitehall, if possible, before Sunday.

It was not the Duke's wish to proceed further without resting himself and horse; but being anxious to please Mistress Penwick, he said 'twould be his pleasure to start at her convenience; whereupon she relaxed her ardour, finding no opposition, and asked him if he thought the weather would permit. He answered that the weather must permit, and that they could easily reach their destination without killing more than three relays.

"Nay, nay, your Grace, if one horse only were to die, I would not permit such hurry!"

Suffice it; the Duke had his rest, and being of no mind to remain longer, at five o'clock in a gale of wind and rain set forth.

They had but common post-chaises as any squire would have, as these travelled about without drawing the attention that a London coach would. They rattled and slid along at their own convenience on the muddy road, and the postilion were soon reeking with mire thrown from the horses' feet.

For five hours the chaise jostled Constance, until she declared she would go no farther. Buckingham, who rode with his secret in the chaise that followed, said if they stopped to rest over night, they could not reach Whitehall before the King should leave.

This was a ruse planned by himself and Monmouth, as the latter had settled where he should take Katherine, and the former, not having had time to examine the contents of the bags, was loath she should see the King ere he had done so.

Katherine, seeing that Constance' lips were blue and her face pale, and forgetting her ladyship's evil ways, agreed they should stop at the first inn and there lie until the next morning; Janet having declared privately to her mistress that she should not waste any time with her ladyship.

Though the night was black and the road uncertain, yet they maintained a fair pace over the open downs, having left the shadowy trees behind; but there were no lights ahead and the prospects of getting shelter for the night were dubitable.

Constance became more and more impatient, pulling up the window every few minutes to inquire if any lights were to be seen, each time letting in a shower of rain that deluged her dress. This dampness was soon felt by her ladyship, whose temper could hardly keep her warm, and she called for blankets. There were none. At this knowledge she grew worse, and cried that she was in a chill and must have aid from somewhere.

For a truth, her teeth were chattering and her hands were cold, but it was nothing but mimosis brought on by the evil caldron that boiled within her wicked body. She had heard Buckingham tell Katherine that the King would be gone from Whitehall if they were delayed. Her plans were now made, and this sudden illness was a ruse to detain the maid. No, she must not see the King. She must now, first of all, become Monmouth's mistress, then Cedric in his wild despair would turn again to her; his playfellow, his old love, Constance.

Whether the postilion were in their master's confidence or not is not certain, but just before midnight they plunged into a narrow, miry road that traversed wastes and low coppices; the plash of the horses' feet showed the tract to be marshy and full of pools. Her ladyship looked out across the dreary fen and exclaimed, —

"I'll be damned, they have set us out like

ducks!" At her words Katherine drew from her with disgust. It was the first she had heard her swear; but she had not yet seen her true nature.

On a sudden the chaise made a lunge and stopped in a deep rut. Some one plodded laboriously to the door and thrust in a rain-soaked visage, saying, —

"Their Graces beg your patience, as we cannot move until help comes. There is a light ahead, and we hope to get on directly."

It was hours, however, before the lumbering equipages were pried out and started on. The light beyond had paled as dawn broke. They were once more upon the causeway, and the horses' feet beating with loud and even step upon the wet road.

Constance had calmed, and with the other occupants slept through the long delay. Nor did she wake until they had entered a thick wood where the branches of the trees swept tumultuously against the window. Then she opened her eyes with a start and saw Katherine still sleeping, her head pillowed on Janet's bosom. Her limbs were stiff from their cramped position. Vainly she essayed to stretch, and cried out as a rheumatic pain took her. She swore roundly and vowed she would alight at the first hut they should come upon.

It seemed hours before they came to a long, low stone building, evidently an old-time lodge.

It was covered with ivy that trembled and glistened in the wind and rain.

The chaises stopped at the door, which was thrown open by an outrider who knocked up the locker with his whip handle.

The opening disclosed great, high-backed pews and an altar and pulpit. It was indeed a place of refuge to the weary travellers. It was dry and clean and afforded rest. Katherine stepped inside first, and immediately knelt and crossed herself. Monmouth did the same, knowing that the maid's eyes were upon him.

They took seats not far from the altar and settled themselves comfortably; for the servants had gone to find food and fresh horses.

Katherine was stirred by the sacredness of the day and place, and took little part in the conversation that was becoming more and more animated, as the Dukes and Constance drank heavily of wine brought from Monmouth's box in the chaise. And when meat, bread and cheese were brought and more wine was drank, her ladyship became maudlin and cast her eye about for diversion.

It fell upon the pulpit, and she tripped up to it, passing over the sacred altar in vulgar *insouciance.*

It pained Katherine to see the place so lightly esteemed, and she gave a little cry of "Oh!" as Constance threw open the Bible and began to preach in mockery of the Methody parson.

Buckingham's face was as stolid as Janet's; Monmouth's bearing a smile that was bastard of mirth.

Hardly was her ladyship started, when a tall form, strong boned and sinewy, strode through the open door. His ruddy face disclosed what appeared to be a stern and rough temper. His forehead was high; his nose well set over a mouth moderately large. His habit was plain and modest. The rain dripped from his red hair and the bit of mustachio that he wore on his upper lip. His quick, sharp eye noted the men and women that sat apart, and then turned like a flash upon the woman in the pulpit.

As Constance saw the man full in the face, there was a bathos in her zeal, and she stopped, open-mouthed, and closed the book.

Neither Buckingham nor Monmouth could see the countenance of him that entered, so they held quiet and wondered at her ladyship's behaviour. Katherine had bent her head upon the back of the seat.

The tall man proceeded up the aisle, his eyes upon the titled woman whose face was now covered with a genuine blush. For the first time in her life she felt ashamed. She felt a presence near her that was not altogether of this earth's mould.

At last regaining a semblance of her usual *aplomb*, she stepped from the pulpit and made

toward the door, where others were entering. She looked back when half-way down the aisle and beckoned to the others of her party to follow. As she did so, there came from the pulpit a voice so rich and sweet, so penetrating the soul, the woman trembled and listened.

It was the "Kyrie Eleison" sung in a new tune with clear, strong English words, and they rung and rung in Constance' ears, as they continued to do for the rest of her days.

"He is a Ranter. Let us stay and hear him?" Monmouth said.

"Nay," said Katherine; "I am without covering for my head. Let's begone, the meeting is gathering. What a glory is in his countenance, and his voice is like music!"

"The lack of a bonnet need not hinder. Thou art a lady and privileged."

"Nay, nay. I would know who he is?" Monmouth plucked the sleeve of a passer-by and inquired. The man answered with a question put in a whisper,—

"Hast never read 'Pilgrim's Progress'?" The Duke threw back a glance at the form in the pulpit, then strode forward and jumped into the chaise.

CHAPTER XVII

TELLS OF THE DOINGS OF ALL CONCERNED

THE house stood surrounded by a beautiful lawn that sloped gradually to the river. Trees in full leaf and woody perennial plants in full blossom, dotted the sward. The long, low stone building was covered with vines that hung in rich purple bloom. All was quiet, refined, subdued—without pomp. Not so was the chief inmate of this charming abode. She stood gowned in filmy white, waiting for Janet to spread her repast, but the nurse moved at leisure, resolving to give the maid meat for thought, as she did for the body. She said:

"When a maid is without father or mother, and away from her rightful guardians, and has presented her such frocks as thou dost wear, 'tis the maid's duty to find out whence such gorgeous and unmonastic apparel comes."

"But, Janet, I do know. The Abbés have made provision for me. They bade me leave the castle without incumbrance, and the chest was sent for my necessity. I mean to pay it all back when I return—or when I send to Lord Cedric."

"And when will that be, Lambkin?"

"When the King gives me audience."

"And thou art expecting the Duke of Monmouth to bring the word from Whitehall?"

"He said 'twas his pleasure so to do."

"Now God pity me this day; I would I had never seen it!"

"Why wearest thou so sorry a face, Janet?"

"For thy too fat zeal. Is it not enough to make an ingrowing visage?"

"How so?" said Katherine in feigned *insouciance.*

"A surfeit of good, like a too-full cup, boils over and falls to ill."

"Then, Janet, surfeit sin 'til it bubbles up, runs over,—perhaps a better cup to fill."

"Alack, alas, for youth's philosophy!"

"At what art thou driving, nurse; thou canst neither affect Shakespeare nor the Bible!"

"Have I not always loved thee, Lambkin; search thy memory; did I ever tell thee lies or use the veil of falsehood to cover from thee that which I would not have thee know?"

"Nay; but thou hast used artifice 'til it is threadbare, and I now behold its naked warp."

"But hast well served, thou canst not deny. It has made thee the sweet innocent bud thou art, and we will enshrine its shade, though it hath no soul to join it hereafter, and I will resort to vulgar frankness, employed by the truculent commonplace, and say we live in an age of

swaggering, badgering, immoral-begotten, vice-ridden, irreligious decrepitude—" Katherine made a hissing noise with her teeth, as if she had been suddenly and severely pricked by a pin, then put up her hands and stopped her ears—"and this day, Mistress Penwick thou shalt know the character of thy King— Nay, thou shalt know. I will tell thee that 'twill poison thy mind of one of so great station ——"

"Wouldst thou assail his morals, Janet?"

"'Tis impossible to assail that a man hath not."

"Then 'twould be a field for sweet mission to teach him morals."

"And wouldst thou delegate thyself to such an office?".

"Aye, why not?"

"Because he would steal thy knowledge ere thou hadst found his heart, and thou wouldst find thyself insolvent of virtue."

"Thou hast overreached artifice, Janet, and gone back to Bible days and corrupted them by borrowing parabolic speech to waste upon deaf-eared seventeenth century maid."

"Ah, Lambkin; with closed ears thou dost not becalm sight and wit, they cease not to fructify under suasion of childhood impregnations. I fear not for thee, if thou art forewarned. If thou art taken to the King, he will straightway be enamoured of thy beauteous face and will

wish to have thee near him, and because he is of so great a title, he will expect to mould thee to his desires, whether 'tis thy will or not. He may perhaps overawe thee, and thou wilt feel flattered by his approaches, which will seem sincere to thy untutored perceptions. 'Twill be thy first meeting with a King. There is one thing most sure, thou wilt not think him handsome; he has not the rich colouring that so marks Lord Cedric's face, nor yet the clearness of countenance. The King is most swarthy, gross featured and unfitted to thy fancy. And how wouldst thou like such to approach thee and fondle thy hand—perhaps imprint thy cheek with a caress, or his long fingers to go a foraging on thy slender neck?"

"Nay, nay, Janet; I should most surely hate such an one. I am sure I should hate! hate!"

"But 'tis surely to what thou art coming."

"But, Janet, the Duke of Monmouth is the King's son, and his Grace of Buckingham his friend; and with these two at my side, what harm could come to me?"

"Should the King propose to keep thee with him, could they lie like slaves or dogs across thy threshold in the dead hours of night to keep unwelcome visitors from thy door?" Katherine's eyes appeared on a sudden to open wide upon a thing she had not dreamed of before.

"Indeed, Janet, I think I see the trend of thy parables. He is then debauched and given to

entering rooms not his own at any hour he chooses. I will be most careful and avoid spending the night."

"But he may insist on thy presence, and no one dare gainsay the Royal will."

"I am for the time of his dominion, but we can claim at any moment King Louis' protection, and therefore I may defy him if I wish?"

"'Twill be like jumping from the river into the sea. I understand, Lambkin, thou art bent upon paying well for thy popish idolatry. If his Majesty sets black eyes on thee, thou art undone. If thou art determined to go, we must have some way to prevent his falling in love with thee. Thou wilt be willing to do this for me and —thyself, Love?"

"Then I might not become that I so much wish—a Lady of Honour!"

"That phrase, my Lambkin, is paradoxical—'Lady of Honour.'"

"Janet, thou dost turn all sweets to bitterness!—Then I will mottle my face and wear a hump and be spurned outright. 'Twill ill serve me. 'Twill not accord a safe issue."

"Thou must not forget the King hath a tender heart for distress, and now I think on it, 'tis possible, if thou didst so disfigure thyself, thou wouldst gain his reply the quicker. We will mottle thy face with leprous spots and cover thee with old woman's clothes, placing a hump upon

thy shoulder. And no one shall be privy to our scheme but his Grace, and my lord of Buckingham, if they are to attend us." Janet felt satisfied with the turn affairs had taken.

"I think I shall enjoy it hugely. 'Twill be fine sport to so puzzle the King, and when he sees me as I am—" and Mistress Penwick turned proudly to a mirror—"he will be pleased!"

"We will not think of that now, Lambkin. When dost thou expect her ladyship?"

"She did not say, but I think perchance she will come before the Duke of Monmouth returns."

"And he will not come before the morrow, didst thou say?"

"When I demurred at not going straight to his Majesty, he said 'twould be meet for me to remain here until he should first see him; then he should return in a day. Those were his words, Miss Wadham, *verbatim*,—now thou dost know everything I do, but—the church secret; and if thou wert not insolvent for ways and means, thou wouldst have had that." With a sudden step, the maid flung her arms about Janet, who ever felt hurt when called Miss Wadham.

Katherine sat to her evening meal with many flutterings of pleasure in her young and guileless heart. Her first thought was of Cedric. He was going to live and doubtless would follow her as soon as he was able, and she would again see his

handsome features and hear him admonish her with a tenderness she was sure he would show after being so frightened by her absence. It did not come to her that she should be in sackcloth and ashes for causing him such woeful pain and misery. She only tried to remember how he looked, as many a love-sick maiden hath done heretofore. She pictured the rich colouring of his cheeks and how his dark eyes had looked into hers; and she remembered how once he had thus beheld her, his glance sweeping her face, then he had taken her hand and pressed his lips to it passionately. Her face grew rose red and she trembled with ecstasy. She, so perfect in mould and health, was capable of extravagant and overpowering emotion; a rapturous exaltation that filled her and took possession of her whole being. She tried to turn her thoughts to Sir Julian, and wondered vaguely why he had not come to London. He had intended leaving the castle before this; and why had he not found her? He might know she would like to inquire of those at home, —the Duke of Ellswold and the others that were ill. The thought seemed to grow upon her, and she wondered more and more why no one had been sent after her, and how very welcome Sir Julian would be. Could it be that Lord Cedric was too ill for him to leave?

The Dukes had fairly left Constance and Katherine at the very door of this villa belonging

to one of Monmouth's friends, and proceeded at once to Whitehall, where they needs must report of their visit to the Duke of Ellswold. The King detained them near his person, much to the annoyance of Buckingham and serious discomfort to Monmouth. The latter, so anxious for the companionship of Mistress Penwick, could not help but show his uneasiness and hurry to withdraw, which made his Majesty still more obstinate.

Two days Katherine had been thus alone at the villa, little knowing the idea of bringing her cause to the King's notice was the most foreign to either Buckingham or Monmouth, the latter wishing to promote his own cause with her until she should become satisfied to remain at his side, without seeking further Court favour. The former gentleman had among his looted treasures certain papers that made necessary, for his own personal aggrandizement, the strict seclusion of Mistress Penwick.

Lady Constance had been so thwarted—her mode of battle proving so abortive—she resolved to fight as things came in her way, without method or forethought. There was only one settled arrangement; that was the full and complete destruction of this woman that had come between her and Cedric. She had gone, after a few hours of rest at the villa, to the mercer's for silks and velvets and furbelows to array herself

for conquest and take—now that she had fair hold on Royalty itself—some masculine heart; if not the heart, the hand without it; if not Cedric's, be it whose it might, so it were titled and rich. She also sought Cantemir and news from Crandlemar.

As she stood at the polished counter in the mercer's shop, she glanced without and saw—or thought as much—Lord Cedric himself, pale, yet stepping in full strength from a chair. She quitted the counter and hastened to the entrance and looked up and down the busy street with longing eyes. But there was no sign of my lord's handsome figure. After securing her purchase, she repaired at once to Lord Taunton's—a kinsman of Cedric's—'twas possible he would be stopping there. But he was not.

She rode from place to place, hoping at every turn to see him; but to her chagrin she found him not, even at a certain inn in Covent Garden, where he had been wont to stay. She drove in her cream-hued coach to the Mall, but he was not to be found.

Her first act after reaching London had been to dispatch a letter posthaste to the castle, telling of her abduction by the Duke of Monmouth, who, she believed was determined to bring herself and Mistress Penwick to the King's notice, as he avowed Court was not Court without such faces. She, being so widely known and

so well connected, had been allowed her freedom, on condition that she returned promptly and keep their hiding place a secret. Then came that she felt would touch Cedric.

"I overheard some converse about your Lordship, a hint that some knave gave thee a slight wound. Now, if this be true, if thou art hurt at all—which I cannot allow myself to think—tell me, tell me, Cedric, and I will fly from Court and all the world to thee, my sweet cousin, my playfellow, my beloved friend, now."

This letter fortunately did not reach Cedric in time to give him a relapse, as he was on his way to London when the courier arrived at the castle.

He had drawn rein at Tabard Inn, Southwark. It abutted on the Thames and was opposite the city, and it suited his fancy to stop here, rather than ride into London. His business was private and not far from his present quarters. His wound had healed enough to give him no trouble, and action kept his mind easy. He had seen Constance with as fleeting a glimpse as hers had been of him. It was quite enough, however, he wishing never to set eyes upon her again.

That evening he went to seek Buckingham at the Royal Palace. He had no austere regard for the pomp and splendour of the Court at best, and now he was almost unconscious of his surroundings. His azure-hued costume was magnificent in its profusion of embroidery and precious

stones. There were none more handsome of face or figure. Courtiers and wits abounded, but none more courtly or witty than he, when he was moved. None bowed before his Majesty's dais with more grace, appearing more a king than he who filled the Royal chair. He erred not in the most minute detail of demeanour. There was no one in the realm that held more of his Majesty's regard.

After being detained some moments at the Royal chair, he went to seek Buckingham, whose first words smote him foolishly.

"It is said, my lord, that Love hath Cupid's wings, and I verily believe William was right, or else how couldst thou have fluttered from a couch of painful wounds to London either by chaise or a horse? Ah!—Love is nascent; after cycles of time it may become mature enough to be introduced into Court—eh!—my lord?"

"Contemporary chronicles relate that the mind is capable of greater suffering than the body, and when both are affected, if we give precedence to the employment of the mind, the body is at once cured; hence my sound chest. Hast thou seen Sir Julian?"

"He is with Monmouth in his chamber. They have been drinking deep, or at least the Duke, who is pouring out in Pomphrey's ear confidences almost too maudlin to be understood;" and there was a covert sneer on the haughty lips

of his Grace. At the name of Monmouth and the knowledge that he was not with Katherine, Cedric's great tension appeared to snap asunder. For a moment Buckingham gazed at his companion as if in him there were undiscovered mines. Then suddenly his mind and eye returned to the tangible, and he run his arm through that of Cedric's and drew him away. When they were quite alone, the Duke, without the shadow of compunction, said,—

"You, my lord, are ambitious of nothing but domesticity. Is it not so?" His Lordship looked up with a start. If there was one thing he hated more than another, it was intrigue. And though he was ever environed by it, yet 'twas not his business now. He had come seeking Buckingham for the purpose of asking his assistance with the Duke of Monmouth, and at these words, so foreign from his interests, he frowned slightly and answered,—

"'Twould be difficult to say at what I aspire, seeing the thing I coveted most is taken from me. If that were mine, it might open up a vista of aspirations I had ne'er thought on heretofore. I see only one thing at the present worth possessing."

"And to possess that—thou art one of the richest nobles in the realm—eh! Cedric?" His Lordship thought he saw the trend of his Grace's mind, and felt better.

"I'm rich to be sure, egad! What's the game, faro, loo, crib, langquement or quinze?" and he tapped his pouncet-box nervously.

"We have always been good, true friends, my lord. Your father and mine have shared in many and continued vicissitudes, and for this cause alone, barring our friendships of more recent years, I would give thee a secret of which I am only half owner."

"And what is this secret, your Grace? I am interested."

"A secret cut into is only half a secret, and——"

"Ah! ah! how stupid I have grown! By all means, we are dealing in fractions, and to get the other half I must either pay or go a-hunting for it."

"And thou, being hot-foot after most precious game, methought 'twould best serve to give thee a clue, as to the value of the secret, that thou couldst determine whether 'twas worth the finding;—whether 'twas worth the leaving off pursuit of that thou art after,"—and the Duke threw open his waistcoat and revealed its lining of rare satin and a pocket that contained a paper written upon in a writing that made Lord Cedric start, for he recognized it as Sir John Penwick's. And there recurred to him the conversation he overheard at the monastery, when one said,—"and once Sir John gets to this country." But nay;

he did not believe the man was alive; had he not his very last words in his own waistcoat pocket? So he spoke out disdainfully,—

"And thou dost embroider thy facings with dead men's autographs?"

"They are the better preserved, my lord," said the Duke, with a smile.

"Then I am to understand the secret doth nearly concern Mistress Penwick, and if I should show her favour, I would pay well for a sequel to that thou art about to unfold, eh! Duke?"

"Aye, pay well; for the demand will be more than thou dost imagine," and he took the paper and gave it into Cedric's hands.

At a glance Cedric saw that the outside paper only was written on by Sir John; the inner document, containing the whole story, being made in a strange hand. And Cedric said to himself,—"Aye, 'tis a ruse. Sir John is dead and I'll wager on 't."

"Thou mayest occupy my chamber, which for the present is here." The Duke left the anxious Cedric to read at leisure.

Lord Cedric knew 'twas not his Grace's way to waste time on things of no moment, and he therefore apprehended evil and his fingers trembled; his dark eyes grew large as he read; his face changing from red to white as the different emotions were awakened; his white teeth crushing his lips. Sir John Penwick had left England, tak-

ing all his worldly goods—which were of no mean value—with him. He settled his possessions in the New World. These in time became very great and he was known as one of the wealthiest men in the locality in which he lived. After six years of married life, a great grief came upon him; his wife died, leaving him a baby girl of five. This so unsettled him—having loved his wife beyond measure—he turned again to warfare, having interest and inclination for naught else. He sent his baby daughter with her nurse, Janet Wadham, to the Ursuline Convent at Quebec, where they remained until coming to England. Sir John travelled about from one country to another, engaging in all kinds of intrigue and war. One Jean La Fosse—a Jesuit priest—had been for many years the tried and true friend of Sir John, having been in his early years a suitor to Lady Penwick. This friendship had grown so stout that when they met again in the New World, Sir John put his possessions, in trust, into La Fosse's keeping. When Sir John was taken prisoner, a sort of treaty had been entered into between the French and English, and hostages were required for prisoners of importance. La Fosse was now holding high office in the ranks of his adopted country—England. Therefore, when hostage was asked by the English for Sir John Penwick, La Fosse saw the chance he had waited for for years, and his

craven heart rejoiced at the opportunity. Sir John was every inch an Englishman, and since being prisoner of the French, determined as far as possible to place his belongings with his own country. He had thought it all out and wrote his desires to La Fosse. Of course, what belonged to Sir John belonged to England, but his possessions were on French soil and his daughter in a French convent. And now Sir John felt 'twould be an opportunity to place his child forever in the hands of his own country. La Fosse had so shaped affairs, that Sir John was at his mercy, and at Sir John's proposal that his child should be held as hostage for himself, he had answered that the babe was of too tender years to be accepted unless accompanied by lands, tenements and hereditaments. This was a happy thought to Sir John, and his old trust of La Fosse came back. "After all," he thought, "the French would rather give up my child than a man, but my possessions they would never give." So, not suspecting La Fosse's duplicity, he gave him legal right to place his property as hostage also. The child was to remain at the convent, unless England preferred to have her under their own *régime*. La Fosse was sure Sir John would never again be free and could never, of course, claim his lands. He went so far as to make sure —as sure as was in his power—that Penwick should not be released. He, being a man of

shrewdness, at once manipulated affairs without the knowledge of his sovereign or the higher powers about him. In a very short time these possessions were built upon by the Jesuits, who, through La Fosse, claimed all right and title. But La Fosse was forgetful. He never gave the babe a second thought, it being of no consequence whatever. It would, no doubt, sicken and die without a mother's care. He was aware of its whereabouts, but even that in time was forgotten, his mind being occupied by more pertinent thoughts. This was a great victory for the Catholics, whose lands had been confiscated in England, and La Fosse felt he had dealt a master stroke for his religion. But no mortal man can equal Time as an adept in chicanery. He brings forth truths unheard of or dreamt by poor humanity.

Years went by and La Fosse was suspicioned. At the first smell of smoke, La Fosse fled. No one knew whither. He escaped, however, to the monastery upon Lord Cedric's estates. The sudden appearance of Mistress Penwick at the monastery was believed to be a direct answer to their prayers. When, too, it was found without a doubt she was Sir John's daughter, they felt she belonged to them to do with as they pleased, so all things were accomplished for the benefit of the only divine church. Their rights in the New World were now being meddled with and this

God-send was to give them, with her own hand, all right and title to the property in question.

Sir John had vaguely heard while in prison of Jean La Fosse's duplicity, and at once sought to save his daughter from his hands by sending her to his old friend, Lord Cedric of Crandlemar. He, angry at himself for being so duped, and heartbroken at his loss of property, knew of nothing else to do but call upon his Lordship for his child's protection; yet he was too proud to tell him why these calamities had come upon him. Indeed, any man would take him for a fool for so trusting another. He had been ill when writing those letters. He never expected to arise from bed again and thought 'twas best to say he was dying; 'twould perhaps touch Cedric's heart as nothing else would! Thus ended a document that was still incomplete, and his Lordship sat wondering and thinking. This meant that the Catholics were exposing Katherine to the King's pleasure. She was being sent to him for a title—a title that was to give them all her possessions. And Buckingham held the clue that would save those lands or—or her father—if he were alive. Aye, he should have all the money he asked; for the Catholics should not have their way. "They shall not, by God, they shall not!"

"They shall not!" quoted Buckingham behind him.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT MONMOUTH'S VILLA

Lord Cedric looked about him. He had heard no sound and was surprised and not well pleased that Buckingham had so caught him off his guard; for he now understood that the Duke was undoubtedly deriving some benefits from this fiendish plot, and the greater his perturbation the easier mark for his Grace.

"The maid proposes at all hazards to see the King. Monmouth is as determined she shall not. However, if she escapes the Duke, she will visit Whitehall and present her plea to his Majesty for his signature. He is—after seeing her—not supposed to refuse her anything. And not knowing the value of these lands will sign the paper, thereby giving the Catholics the property. Then if he sees fit—which of course he will—will retain the beauty as a Maid of Honour. If he should refuse the plea, she is to hand him a sealed paper, which will give him the knowledge that he has before him a hostage who wishes his signature to the willing of her property to her beloved Church. They do not count on his putting two and two together and seeing their scheme. They think he will be so infatuated,

that 'twill be 'aye, aye, aye,' to her every look. She only knows half the contents of the thing she presses 'neath the folds of her dress."

"By God, Buckingham, this is despicable! She to be made the tool of her religion!"

"There are other complications, my lord. Providing thou art successful in running the gauntlet with Monmouth first, then the King, thou, thyself, art in danger of the Tower or Tyburn-tree." With a bound Cedric was upon his feet and sprang toward the Duke,—

"A thousand devils, man, I care not for myself,—'tis the maid; beside—what have I done, why am I so threatened?"

"The scheme for thy destruction is already set a-foot. If thou shouldst get the maid in any wise, it appears thou art doomed. Take my advice, look to thyself and let the——"

"'Sdeath! finish it not!" and there was that in the young lord's eyes that curtailed the Duke's words, and he stood frowning at Cedric and thinking what next to say.

"When thou art acquainted with the circumstances, my lord, thou wilt see thy peril. One Christopher, whom I once befriended with a bottle of wine in a certain close passage, came tottering to me, asking for my patronage, which I accorded him, as he was a sorry spectacle. As a reward for my seeming kindness, he told me that the knave Cantemir was arousing the Prot-

estants by speaking of the monastery being a *rendezvous* for all good Catholics, naming the lord of Crandlemar as one of them. The knave is working with both factions. He has gained some powerful help. These are to come upon the King and demand a confiscation of thy lands, thou art also to be sent to Tower or Tyburn-tree for the murder of thy servant ——"

"Enough, enough, my heaven! I did kill the bastard Christopher."

"Ah! not so. 'The bastard Christopher' is still on his legs and gives Cantemir's plans away; for the knave kicked him when he was down. Thou art to have thy head, but ——"

"Nay, my friend, tell me no more. Ah!—is there any limit to this devil's industry! I have to thank thee to-night, on the morrow ——"

"I'm expecting to leave Whitehall early —" Cedric started.

"Will Monmouth bear thee company?"

"Nay, his Majesty seems on a sudden to have an undue fondness for him."

"God strengthen it."

"'Tis a pity there is such thing, else his Grace would not care to go."

"And thou and I might not have been brought into this world."

"And Adam have had eyes only for the serpent, not even coveting the apple."

"*Adieu*, my lord!"

"*Adieu*, your Grace!"

The candles were just a-light within the villa, where the thick foliage of tree and vine brought a premature gloaming. Outside fell upon the sward the last rays of the setting sun. In the depths of the shadowy leaves the glow-worms displayed their phosphorescent beauty; the lampyrid beetles plied between gloom and obscurity, impatient for the mirror of night to flaunt therein their illumined finery. In the distance was heard the lusty song of the blowsy yokels, as they clumsily carted homeward the day's gathering. The erudite nightingale threw wide the throttle of his throat and taught some nestling kin the sweetness of his lore.

From the villa doorway passed out Mistress Penwick in fluttering white, with the waxy jasmine upon breast and hair. Down she came, unattended, through aisles bordered by fragrant blossoms, traversing the way from door to postern-gate with quick, light steps.

She was not aware Monmouth had left a strong guard and orders to allow no one to enter save those he made provision for.

As her hand rested upon the gate, a guard stepped from behind a bower of iris and gently opened it for her. She was somewhat taken aback by his presence. The stalwart guard strode after her; she, noticing it, turned about and said sweetly for him to hold the gate open 'til she re-

turned, that she would only be gone a very few minutes.

"My lady is alone upon the highway, and I could not suffer her to be so, begging permission."

"Nay, I wish to be alone. Remain at the gate."

"It may not be, my lady; 'tis his Grace's order to give thee proper escort outside the gate."

"Ah, then—" she turned from him and beckoned to a monk who appeared to be walking aimlessly upon the opposite side of the way, but at her bidding moved with alacrity. When the guard saw her intention, he begged her to consider the Duke's wish that she should communicate with no one.

"I was not aware, sir, that I am held as prisoner. I'm quite sure his Grace was only kindly intentioned for my safety;—and as for further vigilance, 'tis beyond his power to use it." The three now stood at the gate. The monk looking intently at the guard, said, —

"Where hath flown thy religion, Eustis?"

"'Tis a poor religion that hath not the grace to offer its adherents an honest living."

"Ah! then thy faith is hinged upon the *largesse* of the damned. There!—take for the nonce thy meed in honest coin." The Abbé gave him a piece of gold and passed within the gate. The sun now dropped from sight, leaving the villa terraces in sombreness, and brought into promi-

nence glow worm and firefly and the sheen of Mistress Penwick's frock.

"I have watched for thee ever since thou arrived, hoping to catch thine eye.—Hast guarded the billet to the King, my child?"

"Here it is." She took from her bosom the letter. The keen eyes of the Abbé saw the seal was intact and quickly put out his hand deprecating what her act implied.

"'Twas not that, my child; 'twas the fear that thou hadst been robbed, as we have. We trust thee with all our hearts," and she read not hypocrisy in the feint of benignancy.

"Thou hast been deceived into thinking that the Duke of Monmouth or Buckingham will arrange a meeting between thee and the King. The former Duke is evil-intentioned toward thee."

"Ah, my Father; thou dost sorely grieve me! If thou didst not say it, 'twould be hard to believe; for surely he has been most kind to me."

"But 'tis true, nevertheless. He is now with the King and fretting for being so detained from thee. He means to offer thee the protection of his favour; which means thou art to become an inmate of his seraglio. Dost understand me, my child?"

"Ah!—I understand," and Mistress Penwick looked up into the face that the darkness veiled.

"And I have heard that the King is sometimes poorly intentioned." The monk coughed behind

his hand and moved uneasily,—"'Tis said of him, as other like things are reported; but 'tis false. He is a good Catholic at heart, and he will offer thee no insult, else we would not allow thee to approach him. Our first thought is to get thee from Monmouth's hold and place thee in safety elsewhere. The noble Lady Constance is helping us and hopes that by to-night to have arranged certain matters, so with our aid thou mayest be able to see his Majesty very soon. One of the Brotherhood will accompany thee to his presence or meet thee there; for we are anxious of the issue. Thou wilt—" The conversation was interrupted by the sound of wheels. The guard came running to them, crying half aloud, —

"Methinks some one of importance is about to arrive, as there is a coach and outriders and a score of mounted escort. If thou, Father, art found here, I'm doomed. I prithee hide thyself; —and my lady's gown can be seen for a league. Hide here, behind this bunch of iris, 'til the cavalcade hath passed."

It was in truth the young Duke of Monmouth, who was hurrying with the impatience of young, warm blood to his mistress. For all Katherine was indignant with him for having such wicked intentions toward her, yet she was moved by the fact that he was a Prince, the son of the King; and susceptible as are all womankind to mascu-

line beauty, she hardly could withhold her admiration. She did not fear him, on the contrary she wished to play with firebrands and see how he would appear in her eyes, now that she understood him. On a sudden she wished to see him more than any one else in the world, Lord Cedric excepted; and in her adventurous heart vowed to torment and give him pangs to remember her by. Her pride was wrought upon. That any one should presume to love her without thought of espousal! and Janet's words came back to her with great force, making her see her error in accompanying the Duke.

There were a few hasty words spoken by the monk as he left her, and passed through the postern-gate, where none save Eustis saw his tall form. Katherine took her time, as she crossed the lawn to her former seat, stopping here and there to gather a nosegay; exulting all the time at his Grace's discomfort when he found her not within doors. Suddenly she thought of Christopher and of what might happen to the servants if the Duke undertook to vent his displeasure upon them. At the thought, she leant forward, straining her ear for any signs of violence; but she only heard Janet say,—

"My eyes have not been off her, your Grace. I'm just taking her a wrap."

"Give it to me," the Duke said in a voice surprisingly calm and gentle. It piqued Katherine.

It was disappointing not to hear a fierce voice like Cedric's was wont to be. She saw the Duke's form silhouetted by a bush of white blossom and heard from his lips a quaint love ditty. It so set her very susceptible heart to fluttering she knew not whether to be glad or sorry that he was there. She was weaving a garland in a peculiar manner learned at the convent. The finished strands she placed under the bench upon which she sat, pretending the while neither to see nor hear his Grace as he walked about from bush to bush, singing softly. But he soon caught the glimmer of her dress, and he came bounding toward her.

"Pray what does Mistress Penwick out alone on so dark a night?"

"Ah!"—she started in feigned alarm, dropping her flowers and rising hurriedly—"'tis your Grace of Buckingham. I admit I was startled." She made a sweeping courtesy.

"We who love never forget its voice, Mistress. I believed that thou wouldst never be able to find it in Buckingham's tones; for if 'twas there, thou only could note its tenderness." He so ignored her feint—and she knew he understood that she knew not whether to keep up her hypocrisy or recant.

"Didst see the King, your Grace, upon my affair?" He stooped to recover the flowers she had dropped. She hindered him, fearing lest

he should see her schoolgirl play beneath the bench.

"Ah! ah! what hast thou hid there?" She exulted.

"Nothing, your Grace, only—the flowers are not worth the exertion."

"Aye, they are worth the bended knee of a thousand, when dropped from such fair hands," and he again essayed to reach them; but she stood between, and holding her hand out to him, said,—

"Nay. I pray thee come. I am going to the villa. 'Tis growing damp." She timidly made as if to go. He on the instant drew his sword and lunged beneath the bench and drew out upon its point the maid's flowers. He laughed at his disappointment, for he was certain some one was beneath. She felt ashamed of her childish pastime and hastened within doors. He followed, carrying the interwoven hearts upon the point of his sword. He held them high for inspection as he entered the lighted room, and was transported with delight when he saw the design, and complimented her upon its significance.

"Thou dost seem to know that two hearts are to be entwined, at any rate! Even if a voice full of passion doth corrupt thine ears to hearing tones that are vibrantless of love." He broke into a great laugh and looked upon Katherine's blushing face with tender admiration. "Come,

Mistress, I have played thee very uncavalierly, inasmuch as I have not answered thy question. Sit with me and sup. There—his Majesty is indisposed. He will not be able to see thee for at least a week. Then I am to bring the most beautiful woman in the world to Court."

"I am very sorry; my business is imperative——"

"Imperative!—imperative! that such words should fall from cherry lips that will become irresistible should they turn to pouting;—so take heed and tempt me not." He had already swallowed several glasses of wine and was fast becoming audacious.

Janet stood behind Mistress Penwick's chair; her face appearing immutable. The Duke bade the maid drink her wine. She touched her lips to the glass and set down the cup. He swept it passionately to his own. Katherine's boldness was fast declining. She began to wish that something would happen to take the Duke's attention from her. Even Constance' presence would be a relief. If she were only in the garden again—free—she would fly to some place of safety.

He lowered his voice into a passionate whisper and leant over, catching her hand as she would withdraw it. He began to draw her toward him. Her fear was evident, for Monmouth, drunk as he was, saw it, and fell to coaxing.

His voice, not yet maudlin, was sweet and impassioned.

"Thou were not afraid when that Russian knave claimed thee and was about to carry thee off, and now thou hast the King's son to guard and love thee—love—dost hear it, my Precious? And I came to claim thee this night, to tell thee all I know, to make the little Convent Maid wise." He threw his arm about her, almost drawing her from the chair. Katherine was white and trembling, knowing not which way to turn.

"Indeed, sir, I know not thy meaning."

"My meaning? Dost not thou know what love is? Of course thou dost not—if thou didst, it might be I should not care to be thy tutor. Come, I will teach thee this night—now, my Pretty,—now. Come, come with me." He arose and essayed to draw her toward the door that led to an inner chamber. Katherine was well nigh to swooning, and perhaps would have, had not there fell upon her ear the sound of some one entering the house. "Ah, heaven!" she thought, "if it were only Father La Fosse or Sir Julian or even—ah!" She did hear Constance' voice. "Aye, even Constance could think of some way for her to escape." She knew Janet was behind her chair, but she might have lost her usual wit and have become incapable of helping at the very moment she was most needed.

Monmouth drank another glass of wine, then withdrew from his chair and leant over that of the maid, drawing her close in his embrace. He was now so drunk he did not hear the door creak as Janet and Katherine did; the former, seeing the pale, triumphant face of Constance reflected in a mirror, as she stood half-way inside the door. Katherine tried to disengage herself by reaching for another glass of wine. The Duke reached it for her and would hold it to her lips; but she, looking up at him with a feint of a smile, said in coaxing tones,—

"I was getting it for thee; your Highness will drink it?"

"Could I refuse—there!—there! Come!—" He put his arms about her and was carrying her forth, when Janet plucked him by the sleeve and whispered something in his ear. He loosed for a moment her trembling form and she began to weep. These tears made him forget Janet's words, and he turned again to Katherine.

"There, there, my wife; thou dost break my heart at each sob. Here, see here what I brought thee," and he placed on her arm a circlet of rubies. "There, hush thy tears. I will not teach thee anything but how kind I may be—there, sit thee down. I will let thee wait until thou art accustomed to man's caresses." Monmouth's heavy drinking trended to strengthen his good humour, else he might have resented roundly the

interruption of his love-making by the entrance of Lady Constance. He held out his hand to her, saying,—

"Come, my lady; see my poor dear. The poor child is affrighted at my love-making. Thou wouldst not be so frightened, Constance,—eh?"

"I am not a child, your Highness, to fall to weeping if so honourable a gentleman as some should choose to kiss my hand." The Duke reached to the table and pressed another cup of wine to his lips, that were already stiffened by excess.

"Come, Sweet; give me one kiss—" and he bent over her close.

"Nay, nay, I'll not suffer thee." And Katherine drew from him with flashing eyes.

"Come, silly child; one, just one." She fled from his reach. He sought to catch her but was stopped by Constance who whispered something hurriedly. The Duke turned upon Janet and frowned, then broke into a mocking laugh, and with a sly wink at Constance, said,—

"Thou art a trickster, good nurse; thou didst play upon me foully. Good, good nurse! Come, go quickly. Thou shalt see no more love-making; I forbid thee; kiss thy nestling and go. I will watch over her. Come, my sweet, come!" His Grace took the maid in his strong arms, and though his legs threatened collapse, bore her toward the door.

Janet saw the look of devilish menace and triumph upon Lady Constance' face and—beyond—what did she see behind the curtain of the window that looked upon the garden? Surely 'twas something more than the evening breeze that stirred those hangings. 'Twas a familiar face that looked from behind the folds; aye, of a truth, 'twas Sir Julian Pomphrey's. When Monmouth, half carrying Katherine, reached the door and stood some little way beyond its deep embrazure, he turned to Janet again, saying,—

"Go, good nurse. I wait for thine exit. Come, begone!"

"I beg your Grace to forgive the lie I told and give pledge of thy forgiveness by taking this." She handed him a brimming cup.

"Then, good nurse, I forgive thee. Here is to the maid thou dost let go and to the woman I shall bring back." He threw back his head and lifted the cup. As it touched his lips a handkerchief fell about his eyes and a strong hand covered his mouth and the Duke lay helpless upon the floor.

Janet carried the half-fainting maid from the room. As she did so, Sir Julian and Lord Cedric, who had also come through the window, carried the young Duke to another chamber; binding him fast; keeping his eyes well blindfolded and their own tongues still. Constance was left standing in the middle of the floor in dumb surprise and chagrin. In a moment Lord

Cedric returned, and his voice rang steel as he faced her, nor was there shadow of pity as he saw her white face grow ghastly in fear.

"Thou, Constance, art the receptacle of all the damned ills flung from mortals, whether of the mind or body. As for soul, that unknown thing to thee—thou canst not recognize in another and therefore canst take on nothing of it save its punishment hereafter, when thou shalt have no choice of condiment. Thy heart lies festering in the rheum that exuviates from its foul surroundings. Conscience thou art bankrupt of, and in its place doth lurk the bawd that envenoms thy senses and turns thy narrow body into prodigious corruption ——"

"Cedric,—my God, stay thy tongue!"

"Nay, nay; my tongue is a well-matched Jehu for thy devil's race. I would I might scorch thee with it, to give thee foretaste of that to come; perchance 'twould seethe thy rottenness to the quick—if thou of that art not also bereft—and turn thee from thy course. Thou dost pander for the King's son and steal an innocent maid of unripe years to gratify his lust—ah, 'sdeath! thou art but a pernicious wench, as false as hell. And when the nurse whispered that 'twould save the child from shame, thy protrusile tang-of-a-serpent didst sibilate in his ready ear a denial ——"

"Cedric, Cedric; cease, I pray!" And Constance fell upon her knees sobbing. But the

young lord's storm had not yet spent itself, and he sped on in fury:

"I would thy noxious blood had all run out ere mingling with its better, and I had naught of so foul a taint within. If I held the apothecary's skill, I would open my veins and purge from them thy jaundiced blood and let in slime of snakes and putrid matter to sweeten the vessel thus set free——"

"My lord, we must hasten. The maid is ready to depart with her nurse," said Sir Julian. As the young lord turned to him, Lady Constance —crushed and broken—said,—

"Couldst thou not see why I have so misused my better self; have thine eyes been blind all these years not to see how I have loved thee, Cedric—thee—thee—with all my heart and soul?"

"I would not hear thee prate of anything so sacred as love,—'tis sacrilege."

"Nay, not so, Cedric! I love thee more than heaven. I love thy scorn, if to be free from it were to deprive me of thy presence. I would follow thee to the end of time, even though thy brow lowered in ever threatening storm——"

"Nay! thou shalt not follow me. Would I draw such as thou to yonder maid? From this moment thou art none of mine, and I fling thee from me as I would a snake.—Thou didst think to take Mistress Katherine from me; put her

beyond my reach, first, by marriage, then by ruin. Thanks to heaven, both of thy infernal schemes miscarried and she is again in my keeping. And soon I shall fold her to me as my own; pillow her head here, Constance, here, where thou sayest thou shouldst love to lie. I shall press her to my heart as wife, wife—ah! I have at last touched the quick within thee. We may hope there is some redemption—some possibility of bringing thee back from thy foulness ——"

"Come, Cedric, come; we are late!" cried Sir Julian at the door. Lord Cedric turned to go, but Constance flew to his side and grasped his hand,—

"Nay, nay; thou shalt not leave me thus. Thou shalt not leave me to go to one who cares not one jot for thee! Cedric, turn not away. Do not leave me here. Cedric, hear me, take me, take me with thee! I will be so good ——"

Again Sir Julian came and called hastily,— "Indeed, my lord, there is a chaise upon the highway, and if we mistake not 'tis the King's." Cedric loosed himself from Constance and hurried from the room. She flew after him; but he had passed Sir Julian and flung himself upon a horse. Pomphrey saw her plight, and, whether from pity, gallantry, or intrigue, lifted her quickly— before she had time to withdraw from him— into a coach. Cedric remonstrated with him; but Julian was confident of his motive and started

the coach at full speed. They flew along in the opposite direction from whence came the King.

It was his Majesty, who had heard of his son's hiding with some beauteous maid and was resolved to play a trick and come upon him unawares.

It was feared, when he should find Monmouth in such a plight, he would pursue the offenders, if for nothing but to see with his own eyes the maid who had so wrought upon his son's affections.

The coaches bearing Katherine and Constance sped along at a rapid swing. The one bearing Katherine, with Janet by her side, was some distance ahead; Constance alone in the rear. Cedric and Julian rode at either side of the first coach, their horses in full gallop.

They reached Southwark after two hours' hard riding. Katherine was not aware of Lord Cedric's presence, and he avoided meeting her or attracting her attention in any way. He was content with the thought that she was near him.

They proposed to remain at Tabard Inn at least until the next night, when they would set out under cover of the darkness for Crandlemar, where Lord Cedric had given orders to have all things ready for his immediate espousal. He knew that Katherine loved him, and felt sanguine that after passing through so many vicissitudes she would come to her senses and give

up the ideas of churchly duties and religious requirements.

Lady Constance feared the worst, now that Cedric was once more with Katherine. What could she do to stave the matter off? She knew Cantemir would hardly be able to place Cedric in the Tower before another week. She was tempted to poison or kill in some way the maid. Aye, she would kill her—that would be safest. Then Cedric could not have her. They would be parted forever.

CHAPTER XIX

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE COACH

In the meantime his Majesty had entered the villa and found his son bound and in drunken sleep. Seeing he was uninjured, the King fell to laughing at his plight, his ringing tones awakening Monmouth. The King's gentlemen unbound him and brought him to a chair. The youth was not long in collecting himself, quickly making a tale for his father's ears.

"I have caught thee, James,"—said the King, —"but where, oh! where is the maid? Has she flung thee off and escaped with thy guard, who left the gates wide, or didst thou expect us and had them placed so for our convenience?"

"'Tis certain, Sire, I have been foully treated. I have been drugged and some valuable papers taken I had got hold on."

"And who held the papers before thee, a pretty wench, eh?" Monmouth glanced suspiciously at Buckingham, who stood behind the King.

"Now indeed, Sire, I should like thy opinion upon her, and—she hath a secret, as the Duke there can testify." Buckingham started, but met the King's glance with a stolid countenance.

"And what is this secret, George?"

"'Tis something the Papists have enveigled the maid into bringing to thy notice, your Majesty," and the Duke cast a contemptuous glance at Monmouth, who had made a wrong move.

"Then, by God! why was she detained? Why did any one take the papers from her?" His Majesty looked not too kind at his son, who was now fair caught. "We will send for her post-haste." The lackeys were questioned of the direction taken by the coaches that had just left the grounds, and a courier was sent after them, bearing the Royal command to Mistress Penwick to appear before his presence within three days.

The courier did not reach the inn until the party were about to set forth, on account of being turned repeatedly from his course by designing lackeys left along the way for the purpose.

Sir Julian, Katherine and Janet were standing at the coach door when Lady Constance came hurrying down the stairs to join them, unasked; for she was of no mind to let Cedric carry off Katherine without her. She felt it would be worse than death. As she opened her mouth to ask of Cedric—for she saw he was not with the party—the King's messenger rode into the court-yard. Mistress Penwick received the order from the courier with her own hand, and was rejoiced at it; Lady Constance flew to her chamber in an ecstasy; Sir Julian roundly disappointed at the

news he must send Cedric, who had gone on toward Crandlemar. There was no help for them now. They were under the King's order; but—what might not happen in three days?

Sir Julian was as adamant when Constance proposed a trip to London, and would under no circumstances allow her to leave the inn. Janet kept Katherine in complete seclusion, fearing lest some new thing should come upon them. She did not fail, however, to tell Sir Julian of the monk's visit to the grounds of the villa and of his project to accompany her to the King, when an audience should be granted.

"I am glad thou didst apprise me of this, Janet, for it gives me an idea. I have seen lurking about several of the Order and have watched them carefully."

The morning of the eventful day arrived. Mistress Penwick was already gowned in a sombre old woman's dress. A hump was fastened to her shoulder; her face was darkened skillfully and leprous blotches painted thereon. She stepped like a Queen, for all that, and 'twas feared her falseness would become evident to the King's eye.

Lady Constance was to remain at the inn, a prisoner, until Sir Julian saw fit to release her. With curious eyes she watched for Katherine, whom she conceived would be decked in irresistible finery. She even pictured her beauty, clad in that soft brocade of peach and green that so be-

came her figure and enhanced the richness of her youthful bloom.

"Ah! ah!" she cried under her breath, as she saw the maiden's masque, and fairly bit her lips in rage at the clever ruse about to be played upon the King. Back she flew from the window and pranced up and down her chamber in rage, her brain on fire. She sought in its hot depths some way—some way. "It must be done. The King must know. It would be the convent wench's ruin—and what would his Majesty not do for one who should give him hint?" She was not kept under close guard. She could go about the corridors as she chose. Out she flew into one of these and saw near by a scullion furbishing a brass knob.

"Come, fool, hast thou a close mouth?" she said, almost in a whisper.

"Aye, too close for the comfort of my stomach."

"Then here—but first, bring me from anywhere thou canst a gentleman's suit that will cover me in plenty—not too scant, remember, and bring a horse from where thou likest to the door below. Haste thee, and thou shalt have this." She jingled a well-filled purse in his face. Off he ran in hot haste, soon returning with the desired outfit; no doubt looted from some gentleman's closet near by. Quickly she donned it; but here and there were slight alterations to be made, and her

fingers were all a-tremble, slackening speed to a meagre haste. She donned a red-hued periwig and cockle hat, then strutted back and forth, proud of her fine appearance, as, indeed, she looked a roguish fop of no mean parts. She flung out into the passage and asked the lad if the horse was ready.

"Aye, Sir!" he said, impudently. She flung him a bag of gold with a show of masculine strength. Out it flew through the open window, down to the pavement, frightening the steed from his groom, who first stopped to pluck the bag before giving chase to the wily horse. Down came the scullion, followed close by the gay young fop, who waited impatiently outside the door. The guard looked on indifferently, his eyes fixed upon the groom, rather than the young man that paced restlessly up and down the court-yard.

At last Lady Constance dashed out upon the highway with a smile of cunning on her face, a devil's flash from her eyes, a haughty curving on her lips, and her heart beating faster and faster, the nearer she drew to the King's palace. "One masque is as fair as another, and methinks the King's eye will open wider at my boldness than at Mistress Penwick's plain dissembling, should he require a fair show of our feigning. He will love me for my daring and for bringing him the knowledge aforetime of the maid's deception.

And when the wench smiles in triumph, he will bring her down upon her knees by one fair blow of tongue. 'Twould be like his Majesty to deprive her of decent covering, if I can only make her designing plain to him." On she rode in high good humour with her adventure; for if this move was without laches or mischance, 'twould be a triumph indeed. The maid would be ruined and her own fortunes made.

The coach arrived at the Royal Palace upon the stroke of four. Mistress Penwick was conducted to the King's ante-chamber. She was visibly nervous; trying vainly to calm the fast beating of her heart. When at last she was called, Sir Julian walked beside her to the threshold of his Majesty's chamber. The King, ever *insouciant*, had never thought to ask Monmouth the maid's name, and when she was presented as "Mistress Wick," and he beheld her form and attire, he was amazed. He felt he had been made a dupe; that Monmouth had purposely made him believe this girl was beautiful for some subtle cause, perhaps just to gain an audience for her;—then, as he saw the spots upon her face, he recoiled and a horrible thought came. Had she some loathsome disease and been sent to him that he might— He started, his blood boiling with indignation. "Treason," he cried in his heart, and before the maid had arisen from her knees, he called for her dismissal. She was taken pre-

cipitately from the King's presence before she had time to open her mouth.

The King was greatly wrought upon, giving Monmouth the blame. The matter must be sifted. He would write an order for his son's arrest, and—yes, the woman must be taken also.

Sir Julian saw it all in Katherine's disappointed and half-angry face, but without giving her time to relate her grievances, rushed her to the coach, putting her into it with very little ceremony. They were fairly flying from the Palace, turning from the sight of a young fop as he came at full gallop through the throng that crowded near the Royal House.

The youth made known his desire to see the King, saying the matter was an imperative one. Even as he spoke, his Majesty came from within and heard the breathless request.

"What now, my pretty rogue; what is thy wish?"

"May I speak with thee apart?" said the lad, as he knelt and kissed the King's hand. "'Tis something of import—a trick is about to be played upon thee." The King took alarm.

"We are about to start forth, my lad. Come, thou mayest walk by our side, and if thy speech is as neat and comely as thy body, 'tis possible ere we reach the end of yonder corridor thy tongue will have won for thee the Royal favour."

The King leant upon Constance as they swaggered along down the passage.

"May I be so bold as to inquire of your Majesty if there has not come to thee a woman with swart marks upon her face and a hump on her back, preferring a petition for thy signature to some lands now held by the Catholics?" The King started and looked now with great interest upon the girlish fop, and speaking slowly as he answered,—

"Why, yes; she hath come and gone. What of her?"

"She hath played foully upon her King. I would give, Sire, half my life to have seen your Majesty compel her to wash the painted spots from her face and take from her shoulder the false hump, and she ——"

"Ah! ah!" came from the thoroughly awaked King.

"—— is the greatest beauty in England." For the first time Constance gave Katherine her dues.

"Dost thou speak truth, lad?"

"I fear my King too much to speak otherwise, unless, indeed, it were to save his life."

"Then—" said the King, with flashing eyes. —"We shall have her back; we'll send for her at once; and, my pretty lad, thou shalt remain here to see the fun, with your King. 'Twill be rare sport, eh?" He gave Constance so sound a smack upon the shoulder, it came near to knock-

ing her flat. It brought the tears and made her bite her tongue. The King fairly roared with laughter.

Buckingham heard the King's order to recall the woman. He also knew the King's informant, and for reasons of his own sent straightway one to intercept his Majesty's messenger.

Lady Constance, believing that Sir Julian, with Katherine, would return to Tabard Inn, mentioned it. This, of course, allowing they followed Constance' suggestion, gave Sir Julian a good start and Buckingham's messengers time to reach their several destinations.

The night had come with even greater heat than the day. The sultry gloaming foretold a near-by storm. Clouds were brewing fast and thick, with ominous mutterings. Already every inch of blue sky was overcast with a blackness that was heavy and lowering. Occasionally the sullen thunder was prefaced by a jaundiced light that swathed the skies from end to end. The coach bearing Katherine and Janet left the causeway and entered a thick forest. The great trees seemed even larger; their silence becoming portentous. There was not a breath of air. Katherine fanned herself with Janet's hat, but hardly did her efforts create a breeze large enough to move the threads of hair that waved above her forehead.

They had proceeded but a short way into the

forest when the postilion got down to light the lamps.

Sir Julian rode close to the window and spoke of the approaching storm. The stillness was ominous; there being no sound save the plash of a muskrat as he skurried through a dismal, dark pool near by. Katherine jumped at the noise and her small hand grasped the arm of Sir Julian, as it lay across the ledge of the window. She gave a little gasp—just enough to touch Sir Julian tenderly.

"'Tis nothing but a lusty genet, my dear," and his hand closed over hers for a moment. There was something about that touch that thrilled them both; he leant farther toward her as another flash came through the trees and was sure he saw a flush upon her face. The lights from the lanterns flashed up, then—stood silent and unmoved, the boy's breath who stood over them was swallowed in the hot air. Then the coach began to move and at the same time the giant trees stirred in a peculiar way. They, like a vast army, bent low with a sound as of heavy artillery rumbling over a bridge that covered vacuous depths. Then they began a deafening noise, their branches sweeping hard against the coach windows.

Katherine lay back languidly against the cushions, still trembling from the gentle pressure of Sir Julian's hand. For a moment only she en-

joyed this sweet dissipation, then turned from it as if duty called her to think of her visit to the King. She consoled herself that she had done all she could now. When she reached Crandlemar, she should be better able to collect her thoughts and see what would be the next best thing to do. She longed to see Lord Cedric and the Duke and Duchess. She even fell to imagining how the grand, old place would look in midsummer. It seemed like she had been gone months. Would Cedric be changed, she wondered? Would he be pale and fragile looking?

So great was Sir Julian's haste, and so great was the heat, the horses were soon exhausted and began to lag. Sir Julian thought they were near an inn, as it soon proved. He flung open the door and almost lifted Katherine from the coach, so great was his haste. Supper was awaiting them and Katherine for the moment alone, near an open window,—the room appeared close to suffocation with humid heat—waited for Sir Julian to take his seat at her side. Janet was arranging a posset. Suddenly Katherine heard a soft voice behind her; it was low and intense. Hardly could she distinguish it from the soughing of the wind in the trees. She half-turned her head to listen as Sir Julian came toward her. But she caught the words:

"Abbé —— will be in the coach upon thy return. Enjoin silence upon thy nurse and be not afraid."

She thought Sir Julian looked at her suspiciously; but was quite sure he had not seen or heard the person behind her.

Janet, while in the coach had bathed the maid's face and taken from her the garb of disguise, and Katherine now looked her sweet self again, flushed and thoughtful over this new adventure. She was most like her father, ever looking for new fields to conquer. Sir Julian asked her if she would be frightened at a severe storm. She answered it made her somewhat nervous to be abroad.

"Then I will ride inside with thee ——"

"Nay, I could not think of allowing thee. The air is too oppressive." Sir Julian insisted, but to no avail. As they were about to leave the inn, Katherine whispered to Janet that an Abbé would be in the coach and enjoined silence and deaf ears.

"I did not catch his name, but I'm quite sure his voice rung like Abbé La Fosse's. They have doubtless heard I am on my way to the castle, and, knowing 'twould be impossible to see me there, they have taken this way, being impatient to know how fell my suit with the King." Janet for once had no answering word, but uttered a groan of seeming dissent and followed her mistress, who leant upon Sir Julian's arm.

The dim light cast from the lanterns was well-nigh swallowed up in the intense gloom. The

rain was already falling rapidly and Sir Julian opined that it was a hopeful sign, as it presaged no sudden gust that would tear things to pieces. The door of the coach slammed to and the horses started at gallop through the windy forest. Mistress Penwick, now for the first time alone, that is without the surveillance of Cantemir or Eustis, with a beloved Father of her church, flung herself upon her knees at his side, saying:

"Beloved Father, my visit to the King was fruitless; he received me most coldly." The Abbé lifted her from her knees as she spoke, placing her beside him. Her face was close to his, for the noise of the horses' hoofs and the rattling of spurs and bits and the ever-rumbling thunder made speech difficult. His face turned toward her was hid in the shadow of his cowl, and he drew the hood even closer as he answered,—

"We feared it, mightily," and his voice was barely heard above the noise.

"But it grieves me more than I can tell."

"Nay. Thou must not let it."

"But it does, I cannot help it; and I see also thy disappointment, for thy hands tremble."

"We have had much to unnerve us, and I am still under restraint."

"I would thou hadst sent a better *embassage!*"

"We could not have found a fairer." At these words Mistress Penwick shrunk from him, re-

membering her disguise; which, though it was a custom of the time for one to go masqued when and where they pleased, upon whatsoever mission, yet she felt guilty to positive wickedness for having so cloaked her beauty, and did not the Father's words imply that her charms should have won success? For a moment she remained silent. A flash of lightning fell broad through the open window. She quickly glanced at Janet, who appeared to be asleep in her corner. Katherine bent her face close to the Abbé's and whispered,—

"Father, might I not here make my confessions? I would have come to thee at the monastery if it had been possible. The confessional has not been open to me since I left the convent, and I feel I must confess. I must now; for I know not when I shall be able again to have converse with a priest. May I, Father?"

"'Tis a noisome, stormy night and thy nurse there ——"

"I will speak low, beside I care not if she does hear that that doth concern myself; for, indeed she understands me better than I understand myself. Then I may speak, Father?"

"I will hear that I deem needful for the peace of thy soul; if perchance thy soul be wrought upon unhappily; and for sins innocently done I absolve thee already." Mistress Penwick half knelt by the cowled figure and placed her elbows

upon his knees, and after saying the prayers of contrition leant her face close to his.

"I have been guilty of what I believe to be a very great sin. Father, I disguised myself to go before the King!" She trembled and bent her head. The priest's voice was calm and unperturbed.

"And why didst thou that?"

"I heard 'twas an unsafe thing for a maid boasting of some fairness to visit the King."

"Why so?"

"I have heard he keeps them for his own pleasure, allowing not their return."

"And didst thou think we would have let thee go to him, had it not been safe?"

"But I thought, good Father, living as closely as thou dost, thou didst not know of the matters of the world, and I ventured to use my own judgment, meaning no harm. But I will go to him unmasqued if thou dost appoint it so. I intend to do so. Shall I not?"

"Nay, thou hast done all and more than is expected of thee."

"How, more?"

"'Twas brave to go at all after hearing of his Majesty's demeanour."

"But I was not very much afraid; indeed, I became very calm as I entered his presence."

"If I understand, thou wert ambitious to become a Maid of Honour."

"At one time, but having better acquaintance with the Court, I feel my ardour has cooled."

"We have gone somewhat astray, my child. We will finish thy confessions for I soon must leave thee. Indeed, if this is the weighty part of thy sins, there is no need to confess any more."

"One thing I am particularly anxious to inquire of thee. Since love comes and we cannot help it, 'twould be wrong not to give it place?"

"If the love is love and not masquerading passion, and it comes from one who is not altogether unworthy of thee?"

"Indeed, he is most worthy, barring his religion, which is Protestant. I would have advice upon this matter, for I believe the love is mutual."

"My child, if his heart is good and true, and thou lovest him, and he thee, the manner of worshipping God should not be of question, since one shows his love one way and another another. The common scullion, who, from year's end to year's end sees not inside the holy sanctuary, may carry in his heart the divine image of God and pay him homage every breath he draws; while he who walks in sacred robes and abides ever in the shadow of the cross, taking part in all the forms, pomps, vanities and varied monotony, may have Satan within him and breathes out flames of hell as he intones. We can in all things

beside religion discern punctilio. There is no sect that has the control of the Holy Spirit; it is the exclusive property of the individual who gains the right and title of it by the keeping of the ten commandments. So, if thou art sure thou dost love the youth, and art most sure he loves thee sincerely, then ——"

"Then, indeed, I am most happy; for I am sure he is noble and good and—loves me."

"When didst thou learn that he loved thee; for if I mistake not, thou wert recently bent upon marrying one Adrian Cantemir, who, I must declare, is altogether unworthy of a maid who doth possess such virtue."

"I have learned to since—since—I can't tell when—I knew I loved him—yesterday—the day before. I know it now. I tremble when I think of how well I love him. I have been so uncertain, Father. I thought I loved this one, and then another, and for a time I was not sure I knew what love was. Then it came to me on a sudden that I would rather die than live all my life without the one I so desired. And yesterday I knew of a certainty that I loved and that I was loved."

"Yesterday?"—and the priest winced, and there was pain in the tone of his voice as he uttered the word.

"Aye, yesterday—I was thinking. I thought of his kindness to me—of the deference he has

shown me, of his great patience toward me; and I saw how well he loved me."

"Was it the King's son, my child?"

"Nay, one not nearly so gentle as the Duke. He is more noble at heart and hath a most noble name. He hath a handsome countenance, more even than the Duke's, and Janet says he hath the finest mould in all England. Indeed, I do not know so much about such things, but I am sure his hands are near as small as mine, but with a grasp like iron. He is wonderfully strong and hath an awful stamp when in rage, and his temper is most violent and bad, and his tongue is vicious;—indeed, Father, I know not what to do with his oaths. They frighten me."

"Perhaps if thou shouldst go to him and ask in all gentleness, he would leave off blasphemy."

"But I have no influence with him. When anger takes him, he is terrible."

"Then I'm afraid he does not love thee."

"Aye, he loves me; but wants his own way, and—to be sure, I love him quite as well when he does have his way—which is not often. Janet says I provoke him to swear." Again the priest started and his white hands trembled suspiciously.

"And how dost thou so provoke him, child?"

"He would marry me straightway and give me not time to know whether I wanted him or not, and I refused and he fell into an awful fury and

swore oaths and I could not stop him,—Father, I said I hated him, and now he so believes, and I would have him think otherwise; yet I would not tell him for the world. When I meet him, it shall be—with cold looks."

"Then how is he to know thy mind?"

"I know not." Katherine shook her head dolefully.

"Then when he greets thee, why not smile at him and look thy feelings?"

"I know not, only 'tis my way. I shall love to hear him plead again. I hated to hear it once; but now—'twill be like music."

"What if he is cold to thee?"

"If he is cold, I will go to him and ask him to forgive me for what I have done."

"Then thou art culpable?"

"Aye, I fear I am, for he now suffers for my fault, or rather for his love of me."

"But if he greets thee with all love and holds out his arms to thee?"

"Then I shall be most happy, but shall act indifferently."

"I am afraid thou dost treat a serious matter lightly; for 'tis a fickle thing; if he meets thee with open arms, thou wilt be cruel; if he greets thee coldly, thou wilt be indifferent—for fear of thy maiden scruples. What if he takes thee unawares?"

"How, unawares?"

"He might trick thee into a thing thou couldst not recede from. If thou didst find thyself so placed, wouldst thou forgive him and love him just the same?"

"I must always love him, no matter what trick he plays;—but he will play me no trick. If he should again threaten to lock me up, as he has done heretofore, I would go to him and say,—'Nay, I will marry thee now, Cedric!'"

"God, Kate! Kate!" And the priest threw his arms about her, almost crushing her in his great embrace. The cowl slipt from his head and his dark curls swept her face as he bent over her. Instantly she knew him and straightway fell into a rage.

"Thou, thou, Lord Cedric, dare to receive confession from one whose life thou hast no part in. Dost thou know the penalty of such wickedness? All evil will be visited upon thee for playing the part of a holy priest. Indeed, of all the sins I had deemed thee capable, I had ne'er thought of one so wicked as this!" She fell back in the corner of the coach in such fury, she could not find further utterance.

CHAPTER XX

UNPROCLAIMED BANNS

"INDEED, Mistress Penwick, I asked not for thy confessions. But now that I have heard them, 'tis my meed to be punished by thy sharp tongue for that I could not help. Come, Sweet, forgive and love me. Have I not suffered enough?"

"Lambkin, I am out of all humour with thee. Thou art half a termagant, I admit!"

"And thou, too, wert privy to this deception. I am truly without friends!" and the maid began to weep softly behind her handkerchief. Lord Cedric was beside himself with his folly.

"If I only could have withstood thee; but how could I with thy tender words and thy closeness——"

"There is nothing accomplished but mistakes!" Janet ventured, being impatient with both Cedric and Kate.

"——Kate!—Kate! dost not thou know how I have longed for thee; how my heart has ached in thine absence? Those two whole days I lay abed were like so many years, and when I thought

of thy danger, I fell into a fever and I arose and leapt upon the fleetest steed and rode until my fever cooled; and then—when I had thee once more, I could not keep from thee longer; I resolved upon this plan that I might be with thee, and ride by thy side. And thou dost murder me outright. Thou dost kill me, Kate! I was a fool to undertake it, I know; but I thought of two whole days I should be separated from thee and felt I could not bear to wait. Thy words, Kate, were so sweet. Kate, come to me once more and see how loving I can be. Let me dry thy tears,—let thy head rest here upon my heart and close thine eyes and dream—dream, Kate, of what we must be to each other, and then wake and find me bending over thee. Come, Sweet, come!" He sought her elusive fingers and tried to draw her to him with a tenderness she could hardly withstand; but she would not unbend, drawing from him, sinking further into the corner.

"And did Sir Julian know of this ruse of thine?" she asked, haughtily.

"Janet, methinks the maid speaks with thee!"

"What is it, Lambkin? I was not listening."

"I will wait until the storm ceases, perhaps thou wilt find thy hearing by then." There was a long silence within the coach. The tears of Mistress Penwick were dried and she sat sullen, deliberately trying to hate Lord Cedric. There

came a sudden burst of thunder that turned the tide of her thoughts from him to Sir Julian, who rode by her window constantly. At every flash of lightning she saw his spurs glisten, saw the foam fly from the bits of his horse's bridle. He rode there in the storm, heedless of all but her safety and comfort, he that had wounds on his body that spake of great deeds of nobleness and valour! Why should he care for her so? Like a flood he swept into her heart, and she accepted his presence with gladness—shutting out Cedric as well as she was able. She inclined her head toward the window and watched the handsome figure of Sir Julian with a new interest. His form, so like that of Cedric, she began to compare with ancient warriors she had read about and seen pictures of,—then his tender and meaning hand pressure recurred to her, and she flushed mightily. After awhile she fell to thinking of the Duke of Monmouth, the tender thoughts of whom she had not yet resigned,—such were the vacillations of the mind of strong, warm, youthful Mistress Penwick.

The storm grew furious, and the wind blew such a gale it appeared at times as if the trees swept the earth. They bended and swung rudely, brushing hard against the windows. In the midst of its severity the coach came to a standstill and Lord Cedric threw open the door. Janet leant quickly toward him,—

"I pray thee not to go forth in the storm, my lord; 'tis enough to give thee thy death."

"Nay, nay, Janet, 'twill not be summer rain that will kill me, but cold looks and threatening mien." And he stepped out into the night.

"What, Lambkin, if Lord Cedric should catch cold and die? 'Twould kill thee, too; for remorse would give thee no rest."

"I never so disliked him as I do now. I never want to see him again. How shall I look him in the face after confessing such things? I shall die of shame. That is all he wanted to hear me say, and—he heard it—and that is all the benefit he will get." Again she fell to weeping, finding she could wring no sympathy from Janet, who sat coldly listening to her nursling's plaints.

They reached Crandlemar late the second evening, tired and weary. The Duchess of Ellswold greeted them with a happy countenance, so pleased that she could make known to them that her lord was better and the physicians had given permission to remove him to his own county seat. Her greeting to Katherine in particular was evidently a forced one; she feeling sorely distressed at her capricious nature.

Never did the great old seat look so beautiful as it did in its midsummer glory. Mistress Penwick had arisen early and walked out upon the rich greensward. She wandered from place to place, enjoying the gorgeous fullness of leaf and

bloom. She felt a strange disquiet, a longing for love and knowing not the meaning of her unrest vainly tried to find comfort in the beauty of the outer world, that only inclined her heart the more to its desire. She passed from flower to flower, endeavouring to 'suage the uprisings of Cupid. Suddenly she heard the organ peal forth, and straightway she entered the library to hear those great, soothing chords the better. She, being shaken by love, fell upon her knees and tried to pray for comfort, for she felt at the moment she had not one to comfort her. Janet had been taciturn, showing not her affection as had been her wont heretofore. The tears came, and she wept aloud. Then the organ ceased and a moment later Sir Julian stood upon the landing of the stairway, looking down upon her. Without noise he descended and stood by her side. His voice, when he spoke, appeared shaken as if a storm of love wrought upon it.

"Katherine! It pains me to see thee thus. Can I not give thee some bit of comfort?"

"I am comforted already, Sir Julian; thy music did that."

"Then why dost still remain with bowed head and thy sobs unassuaged?"

"I do not know. I must either laugh or cry and—'tis easier to do the latter."

"Come! Mistress Penwick, what can I do for thee? Ask, I pray, anything, for thy happiness

—Katherine—" and for the first time in his life he looked guiltily about him. But no one was near to hear him, and he continued lowly—" thou dost know, surely, that man cannot look on thee without loving?" and he raised her from her knees.

"I am unloved," she answered, the social lie tinging her cheek to a brighter hue.

"Not so, for I love thee."

"Thou, thou, Sir Julian, who art used to spurning woman's heart?"

"Not spurn, nay! I have not found one yet I could do that to, and on the other hand I have found but one I could love, and—that is thine."

"Ah, Sir Julian. I wonder if thou dost love me. 'Tis a great thing to be loved by one who has fought in great battles."

"And thou dost not know that the battle of hearts is much deadlier than that of arms?"

"I do not know; but thou seemest like a warrior of olden time. And for thee to love me!"

"Is it enough? Wilt thou give thyself to me?" There was a silence so long and unbroken Katherine was made to realize that her reply was not to be lightly uttered, so she answered with all the strength of a plaything of caprice,—

"If thou wilt have it so, Sir Julian, I will be thine."

She had hardly finished, when he laid his lips,

to her astonishment, coldly and with formal grace upon her forehead.

"I will not ask thee if thou lovest me, but will say instead dost think thou mayest?"

"But I think I love thee now——"

"Nay, sweet Mistress, thou dost not—" A look of fear came into her eyes. Had Lord Cedric told her confessions? Nay, nay! he would not, she knew.

"How dost come by so much knowledge?" she said, coquettishly.

"I have ascertained by subtleness, but—let it pass. Let us talk of thee now. When wilt thou marry me? If thou art kind, thou wilt say at once."

"Nay, I shall not say that—but—whenever thou dost wish it."

"Of a surety? When I name the hour, wilt thou not gainsay?"

"Nay, my lord. I will not gainsay."

"Then—at eleven, Katherine." She caught her breath quickly and cried forth,—

"This day, Sir Julian! Indeed, thou art in haste, I—I——"

"Thou hast given thy word. At eleven, Katherine."

"By sands or dial?"

"Ah, sweet Katherine, both shall have a bridal favour. We will confer with each. When the golden sand runs out at the eleventh hour, the

dial will be alone and in shadow; for if it please thee, we must be wed secretly and in haste. I noticed but awhile ago how beautiful the dial was. So the sands shall give us the hour, the dial the altar, and the nightingale the nuptial mass."

"But the priest, Sir Julian ——"

"He shall give us the blessing ——"

"Nay, nay; where wilt thou find a priest?" This was not an unexpected question, and Sir Julian was ready for it.

"Lord Cedric's Chaplain can wed us as securely as one of thy church, and as there is no one else, he will serve, will he not, Katherine?"

"Until we find a better."

"Then, not to arouse suspicion, to-night at eleven thou wilt come to the sun-dial and I will meet thee at the foot of the stair that leads from thy chamber to the terrace, and then—'twill be soon over and thou, thou, Katherine, will be—wife. Wilt not regret it,—art sure?" he repeated as she shook her head negatively.

"But why do all men appear in such haste to wed? I would have time to at least think upon it."

"Dost forget that at any moment may come a courier from the King to recall thee; and if so, thou wouldst be obliged to go and be separated from us, perhaps forever? Thou dost not know what may befall thee at any moment. Thou

dost belong to France, and art hostage to England—thou wilt be ready at eleven?"

"Aye, at eleven."

"We will be cautious and not speak above a whisper. The Chaplain will speak low, too; but he is a good soul and would make us fast wed whether we heard him or not." Again he kissed her forehead; she turned rose-red and ran from him hastily. She thought not once of Cedric. Had she done so, 'tis possible she never would have gone to the dial that summer night. She flew to her chamber aflame with this new thing she thought was love. And felt relief that soon Sir Julian, the strong and brave, would take away all her discomfort. He would fight her battles for her, go with her to the King and stand by her side and his Majesty would not dare to offer her insult. It would be a sweet task to convert Sir Julian to her faith. He would became a great Catholic leader. Her breast fairly swelled with pride in anticipation.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ESPOUSAL

NIGHT had come richly laden with the perfume of many flowers, that the darkness seemed to make more pungent, and more distinct to the ear the night sounds. There was no moon, and the thick foliage produced a deep, dark density, mysterious and sweet. The grand terraces about the castle were still, save for the buzz of summer insects and the low, sleepy twittering of birds. There was not a star to be seen and only the glow-worm lent an occasional lilliputian effulgence to the great, dark world. All within the castle appeared to have retired earlier than usual; perhaps for the purpose of an earlier awakening, as their Graces of Ellswold were to set out early on the morrow morning, aiming to make some great distance on their journey before the heat of midday. At a quarter after the hour of ten Janet had kissed her mistress, leaning over her pillow with even more affection than usual.

"Good-night, my Lambkin, my child, my precious maid—good-night and God bless thee!" then snuffed the candles and left her.

Katherine gave no thought to regret, indeed she went so far as to smile at Janet's consternation, when she should find out that for once her "Lambkin" had fooled her. Quickly she leapt from her bed and dressed herself for the first time alone. Though her fingers were deft and skillful at the tapestry frame, and neat and clever at limning, they were slow and bungling when drawing together the laces of her girdle, indeed 'twas very insecurely done, and when she was dressed she had forgotten her stays, and but for the lateness of the hour would have disrobed and donned them. It seemed like an endless task to try and dress again by the poor light of the single candle, screened by her best sunshade in the far corner of the room. She had donned a pale, shimmering brocade. About her neck she twined her mother's pearls, and took up the opal shoulder knot of Cedric's mother's and was about to fasten it when some subtle thought stole the desire from her, and she laid it back in the casket with a sigh. Instead, she placed a bunch of jasmine as her shoulder-brooch, and extinguishing the light went forth to meet her husband by the sun-dial.

She passed out by the door that led on to a small balcony and a-down the flight of outside stairs that were covered with vines in purple bloom. Although the darkness was almost impenetrable, she could distinguish a form waiting

at the foot of the stair. For an instant she paused and whispered timourously,—

"Who art thou?"

"Julian," came as softly back, and a white hand was stretched out to her. Down she flew, intrepid.

"Would I send another to meet thee; didst thou think to turn back, my Katherine?"

"Nay, I should not have turned back; but 'twas assuring to hear thy name. I am not afraid, yet—yet I tremble."

"And 'tis sweet of thee so to do; 'tis maidenly that thou shouldst; 'tis the way of woman. Thou art not afraid, yet thou dost tremble; thou dost try to be brave, yet thou must be assured, and I am here by thy side to assure thee ever," he whispered in her ear.

Down they swept across the upper terrace. Slowly they crossed the greensward, with fairy-like light of firefly to illumine the way; speaking as lovers will, with bated breath. The wind blew gently now and again, casting a shower of petals upon them as they passed. When the leaves shone white, the cavalier would say:

"We are so blessed, nature herself doth sprinkle the bridal path with flowers;"—or, when there fell a darksome shower, Katherine would press close to her lover's side and say,—

"Indeed, Julian, these are petals from those blood-red roses that have hung in such profusion

all summer. It may have some significance. I believe I must return; 'tis not too late to recede."

Then the cavalier drew her closer than before, and so tenderly did plead with her, she forgot her fears. So step by step they neared the thicket where stood the ancient sun-dial that was well-nigh hid with bridal roses.

The Chaplain stood ready; his fragile, pale countenance, hid by the darkness. There was no faltering now. Katherine did not think to turn back; that her heart was not with Sir Julian, that she would ever regret this greatest moment in her life, but stood resolute.

The Chaplain began the ceremony at once, and so softly one could scarcely hear a yard away. Katherine was agitated with the thought that she was really being wedded, and hardly heeded when the Chaplain raised or lowered his voice; appearing almost like one in a dream, so blinded was she with the glamour of her new estate.

At last the Chaplain said the final words, pronouncing the twain as one, and gave his blessing in a somewhat stronger voice that carried in it a note of triumph, and was about to step down from the pedestal of the dial when there flew out from the darkness a young man with drawn sword, who dashed immediately upon the young husband. Barely had the cavalier time to draw aside his wife, and drawing his sword as he did

so, when his *de trop* guest made a fierce attack upon him. The young husband cried out as he met the thrust,—

"Nay, nay, nay, by God nay!" It appeared his antagonist was becalmed of speech, for he answered not but struggled to do so. Failing to find his voice, however, he gave a lunge, which was met by a parry that made him mad, and for a moment ground his teeth as fiercely as he wielded his sword. The young cavalier threw himself on guard in carte, which sent his opponent to giving such thrusts that quickly betrayed his lack of skill and also his deadly intentions. These were met by quick parries. Then the mad antagonist made a sweeping bend and thrust at the cavalier's heart. This was met with a disengage. The mad youth, well spent with anger and want of breath, broke out pantingly,—

"Thou wouldst play the honourable as thou playest the part of Sir Ju——" His last word was cut short by a quick thrust of steel that felled him to the sward. Mistress Katherine stood as if frozen, her hands held tightly in those of the Chaplain, who whispered that it might cost her husband his life should she interfere. He also assured her, saying that the adversary was no swordsman, as she herself soon saw. Some one came running from the castle at the same time Katherine knelt beside the fallen man. But her husband whispered quickly,—

"Nay, nay; arise, Sweet; he is unworthy thy solicitude. Come with me. I gave him but a puny thrust. The Chaplain will look after him." He put his arm about her and raised her up and drew her away, saying, much out of breath,— "I must not be seen, dost know?" She took fright, fearing her lord's danger. Quickly they traversed the terrace and reached the stair leading to Katherine's chamber. As she laid her hand upon the railing, she said timourously,—

"I would hear how serious is the wound before I go inside!"

"But, Katherine," he whispered, "'twas no more than the prick of a pin; beside, dost not thou have anxiety for thy lover's freedom; hast forgotten our lord's temper when he finds I have so disgraced his house by fighting 'neath the very windows? And if the fellow can talk and tells of the marriage, why, I'm undone, and they will begin a search." All the while he led her further up the stair, she unwitting, until they stood fairly inside the threshold and his foot struck against some obstacle.

"Sh–sh!" she enjoined, "Janet is within yonder room and will hear thee; she may already be awake and prying about to know what is astir upon the terrace!"

"Indeed, I think thou hadst better hide me!"

"Nay, I cannot; I know of no place. Dost thou not know of a safe hiding?"

"I am safest here in thy chamber, I am sure. I know of no other place. And if Janet come—which I hardly think possible—thou must fly to her lighted taper and blow it out, and tell some sweet fib,—say the light pains thine eyes."

"A ruse holds not good with Janet. I cannot play upon her wit."

"Then, Sweet, I will lock the door and ——"

"Nay, nay, she will hear thee, and will come to see if I have been awakened."

"Then I had best keep quiet and wait to see what will happen."

"There is naught else for thee to do, for surely thou canst not go below, thou wouldst be seen, and ——"

"—— and, what, Sweet?"

"—— and be taken prisoner."

"And wouldst thou be pained, Sweet?" He drew her close, his dark curls swept her face as he bent his head. Nor did he wait for an answer, but plied her with another question that the moment and the closeness gave license to. "Wilt give, Sweet, the nuptial kiss—'tis my due?" She raised her head from his shoulder ever so slightly to answer him, but the words came not, for his lips were upon hers. She was thrilled with his tenderness; 'twas more than she ever could have thought. And as he held her close, she, not unwilling, declared separation would be instant death. She wondered how she

ever could have withstood love so long. And he kissed her again and again, saying heaven could not offer greater favour. "Dost feel happy now, Sweet?"

She answered not, but stood, her head leant against the rare and scented lace of his steenkirk, held captive, trembling with an ecstasy too sweet to be accounted for.

"Thou dost tremble, Kate; has thy fear not left thee yet?"

"Nay," came soft and breathless from her full red lips. "I am still afraid."

"But what dost thou fear now, so close wrapped?"

"I know not; 'tis a strange fear. If thou shouldst be taken from me, I should die; 'tis this I fear most of all, and even for a separation—nay, nay, I could not live."

"Oh, Sweet, 'tis excess of gladness that thou art wife—wife, the word alone fills me with rapturous exaltation. Wouldst be glad if we had never met thus, should separation come?"

"Nay, a thousand times, nay, these moments are worth more than all my life heretofore."

"Hast forgotten, I must leave the castle before very long, and an *adieu* must be said to thee?"

"I have not forgotten, but 'twill only be for a day. 'Twould be hazardous for thee to go until everything is quiet about."

"And until I have quieted thy fears; until I

have told thee of a strong man's love—my love for thy glorious, youthful beauty. Thy hair, Kate, is more precious than all the amber and bronze the world holds; 'tis rich, soft and heavy, with glorious waves. Thy face so filled with love's blushes warms my breast where it doth lie. The glory of thy eyes that are ever submerging me in their azure depths. Thy slender, white neck and graceful sloping shoulders. Indeed, Sweet, thou art wonderfully made. There could not be a more perfect being. And thou art mine, Sweet; 'tis a wonder that rough man could be so blest. Thou dost often feign coldness, Kate, and now I wonder where thou didst find such condition. 'Twas most unnatural, and how thou couldst so well assume it—but I have found thy true heart. Sweet Kate, thou hast at last fallen victim to Cupid's darts, and fortune hath played me fair and put me in the way to receive such priceless gift, whose dividends are to be all my own." His warm words came so fast and he was so passionate and tender that Katherine took fright and thought 'twas not like Sir Julian to be so, and yet to have him otherwise? nay, she loved him thus, and she remembered the moment he had pressed her hand as they rode through the forest; aye, he could be as loving and tender as—as— She did not finish the thought, for her lord's jewelled fingers had caught her hand and his arm held her close, pressing her ten-

derly; his lips resting upon hers until she grew faint with his ardour.

At last night paled into dawn. The cocks began to crow lustily. About the edges of the great windows in the chamber the light began to peep as if loath to cast one disturbing glance athwart the room. There was a fluttering sigh from the folds of the maiden's handkerchief as her lover bent over her, saying,—

"*Adieu*, Sweet, *adieu* once more. Let me kiss thy eyelids close until they pent these tears that parting hath wrung from thee, and yet, were they not, I would be without weapon, void of panoply, equipped not——"

"But thy urgent tongue and tenderness doth armour thee for conquest!"

"Aye, 'tis love's armour; but thy tears make me strong to enter strife with men. I know 'tis love drives thee, and when that love is for me, I can win all battles."

"Thou must haste before dawn, or thou wilt be taken; for we do not know whether the young man still lives; and Lord Cedric will kill thee if he can."

"There is no doubt but what he lives. His Grace's physicians have no doubt healed the burden of his pain long ago. But do not thou think of him, think only of this sweet night and —dream of our meeting again. And if his lordship keeps thee prisoner, tell Janet thou art fast

wed and she will help thee to our *rendezvous* to-morrow. Pray, Sweet, that the day may be short, for now I see only cycles of time until the set of morrow's sun."

Dawn broke into a new day. Sunshine bathed old Earth in golden splendour. The day grew warm, as higher and higher leapt Phœbus, until he rested high and hot upon Zenith's bosom, causing all mankind to pant by his excess.

Slowly Katherine raised her lazy eyelids until the shining blue beneath lay in quivering uncertainty. She smiled up at Janet, saying, sleepily,—

"I've a notion not to arise to-day. 'Twill be long and wearisome, and hot. What is the use? There is nothing in the world to get up for!"

"Indeed there is a very great deal to get up for. 'Tis a glorious day. The gardens are aglow with beauty and the air is fine, though warm."

"I know, Janet, and 'tis thy desire that I arise, but the castle seems most empty. Their Graces have departed and ——"

"Nay, not so. There has been a great change in the Duke, and the physicians will not allow his leaving his couch."

"Ah, I'm sorry! What time did this change take place?" said Katherine with a feeling of subtleness that for once she had tricked Janet and knew of great things that had happened in

the deep night, when her faithful nurse thought her in dreamland.

"Her Grace says there was a great change in him yesterday, that she noticed it as he ate his dinner."

"And was there no change in the night?" said Katherine sagely.

"Speak out, Lambkin, that 'tis on thy mind—if thou dost mean, was he disturbed when the castle was aroused?—why, no, he was not."

"But how didst thou know there was an arousal?"

"I did play the simpering bride's maid, and stood for witness to thine espousal."

"Ah! ah! ah! Janet, I can keep no secret from thee!" Quickly she sprang to the floor. Her foot struck her lover's sword. She stooped and raised it, and there flashed forth from the jewel encrusted handle the noble armourial bearings, charged upon a gold escutcheon, of Lord Cedric's house. Wonderingly, she examined it and swept her brow with the back of her slender hand. Slowly she spoke, and in a voice vibrant with portent, her eyes now wide open.

"This—this doth trend to set my brain a-whirl, and doth connive to part sense from understanding and mind from body. To be sure, 'twas dark,—and allowing that I was well-nigh intoxicated with love—my brain could truly swear 'twas Sir Julian; and yet this he flung aside doth

confute reason, and I must either ponder upon the this and that in endeavouring to conjoin mental and physical forces to sweet amity or give over that reaching wife's estate hath made of me a sordid fool, as hath it oft made woman heretofore. My senses up until I met one of two at the foot of the stair, I could make affidavit on. The mould of either could well trick the other, providing their heads were as muddled as mine, and in this matter I am also clear. 'Twas meet to speak lowly and the voice was not betrayed. But—there was some restraint at first; for his words came slow and with much flaunting of French—indeed 'twas overdone.—And the duel—ah! ah!—'twas Cedric's 'Nay, nay, nay!—' with an oath that had no note of Sir Julian in it. And hard he strove not to fight, nor did he until the other cried out to him—I see it all plainly; 'twas Cedric, 'twas Cedric! If I could mistake all else, I could not mistake his passion; 'twas: 'Kate' this, and 'Kate' that. Sir Julian never called me else than Katherine. And his words were over plain, and in truth they became not so slow and studied, and there was a leaving off of French. 'Twas he! Ah! and he was so sweet and gentle and near drowned me by his tenderness—'twas such sweet love—" Quickly she hid her blushing face in the pillow, for she forgot she was speaking aloud.

"Hast thou then married mind to body? If

thou hast them well mated and art sure thou art through espousing, I will straightway wed thee to thy clothes, that thou mayest first pay thy respects to their Graces, then go out into the sunshine and walk thee up and down for the half of an hour, where, 'tis most like thou wilt find thy lord, who is too impatient to remain indoors."

"Nay, I shall not see him!"

"Tut, Lambkin! thou wouldst not play the shrew to so noble a lord, that soon, no doubt, will be a great Duke?"

"He hath tricked and deceived me. I will punish him for it. Nay; I have no mind to see him. I could not bear it, Janet. 'Twas this he meant, for I wondered when he said he had fought two duels and had been victor in both. Nay; he shall not see me nor I him." And with these thoughts came others, and thus she fostered malice, promoting but a puny aversion that she cherished the more for its frailty.

"Art thou set upon affecting the manners of an orange girl?"

"Janet, I would not make feint at that I am not."

"Neither would I, if 'twere me, make feint at that thou art. If thou hast the name of Lady, I would fit my demeanour to the word. And it should be an easy thing, for thou art born to the manner."

"But bad nursing doth corrupt good blood!"

"And a froward child doth denote a spared rod!"

"And moral suasion is oft an ethical farce!"

"A votary of non-discipline is impregnable to ethics."

"Oh, Janet, dear Janet, I am weary. How is the young man that was wounded?"

"The same as ever; save his ardour is somewhat cooled."

"Thou dost speak as if thou hadst known him."

"Indeed, any cock of the hackle is essentially commonplace."

"But he carried the sword of a gentleman?"

"Thou dost mean he carried a gentleman's sword."

"Dost thou know who he is, Janet?"

"I have not inquired."

"In other words, thou didst see him. And 'twas—I am sure—Adrian Cantemir."

"'Twas none other."

"I will go down now and see their Graces."

"Art sure thou wilt not see thy lord?"

"Aye, quite!"

"Then—here this is for thee." She handed her a dainty billet, scented with bergamot. Katherine took it in trembling haste, her face rose-hued. It read: "To My Lady of Crandlemar. Greeting to my sweet wife, Kate. I await my reprimand and sword. When I am so hon-

oured, I shall enlist to serve thee with my presence, which, until then, is held by thee in abeyance. Thou canst not rob me of my thoughts, which hold naught else but thee; nor yet that dainty girdle that did encompass thy fair and slender mould. I have it on my heart, close pressed; but it doth keep that it lieth on in turmoil by such proximity. I know thou dost love me, even though I tricked thee. Janet was to tell thee this morning who thy true lord is, for, Sweet, I would have no other image but mine in thy heart, for soon—soon—aye, in a very short time—I may be a prisoner in the Tower. Do not think, Sweet, this is a ruse—but should I be taken where I might not see thy face, 'twould be sweet to know thou didst hold my image, dear. Forgive me, Sweet, and—*au revoir!*—Perhaps thy heart will relent before—before the nightingale sings.—Relent, sweetheart, wife." Kate pressed the billet to her lips without thinking, then turned her back quickly to hide the action; but 'twas too late. Janet had been watching every movement and was satisfied.

"I wish I had not opened it; such letters are disturbing. Janet, go below and find if I may see her Grace without meeting any one." When alone, she devoured again and again the billet, and as Janet returned, thrust it quickly within the bosom of her gown.

"His lordship has returned from the terrace

and is in the picture gallery. Her Grace wishes to see thee and waits breakfast."

For an hour Katherine was with the Duchess, who talked very plainly of the possible death of her husband and the duties of a great estate and noble name that would fall to Cedric and his wife to keep up. Nor did she let the young wife go without telling her into what an awful condition she might not only lead herself but Cedric, when she allowed her caprice to manage her better self. It did her ladyship much good, and she sauntered out upon the lawn and shyly sought the sun-dial and brought from it a nosegay of bridal-roses and fled, shamefaced, with them to her own chamber, there to seat herself by the open window to wait and watch for her young lord.

CHAPTER XXII

CEDRIC IN THE TOILS

In the French colony where lay the valuable lands of Sir John Penwick, there was a lively insurrection of the English. The Papist party, who had built and lived upon the property for the past ten years, was strong, having among the Protestants lively adherents who were Catholics at heart and wore the Protestant cloak that they might the better spy upon them. The English, being so much the weaker, had been lead by a few men who were bought by the Catholics. La Fosse had had to do with these few men only, when he had made a show of settling Sir John's affairs. These men had heretofore held the secret of the hostage; but recent events had stirred them to strife and they had fallen at variance over the spoil. The secret had been let out. The English rose in arms when the French suggested that such a small colonial matter should be settled among themselves; 'twas a shame to bother the Crown.

Upon the sudden outburst, Sir John made his escape from prison. The French said he had been stolen by the English and immediate repa-

ration must be made; his person or a ransom must be had. Or, if they would give up all claim to the property and child,—the latter being produced at once—the French were willing to call the matter settled. Indeed, this was all they wished, and if Sir John could be conveniently made away with forever, and it proven that the English had accomplished it, they would certainly be entitled to his hereditaments.

Buckingham held the key to the situation. He saw a way to pay a ransom for Sir John; also a way to gain enough gold from the enterprise to make himself independent for life. He found Sir John in London, but not until after Cantemir had gained the former's confidence. Buckingham took alarm at Cantemir's knowledge and insisted upon Sir John removing to a place of greater seclusion; it being feared that he would be murdered.

Sir John was fond of the Duke, and beside taking his advice, he laid bare his heart and told him of his great distress over Katherine. Cantemir had said that she was being held dishonourably by the old lord's son, who was profligate and only sought her favour without marriage.

Buckingham assured him to the contrary, and made him acquainted with the true circumstances; not failing to tell him of Mistress Penwick's unsettled disposition; her ambitions, and intractable nature; that she was refractory and

vexatious; petulant and forever thwarting Lord Cedric's advances.

The Duke concluded this friendly visit by insinuating strongly—that Sir John might infer—that the friendship which amounted to nothing less than love, between himself and Lord Cedric, would alone—barring the question of a beautiful daughter—suffice to bring the latter to a full appreciation of Sir John's case. And if a ransom was decided upon, as being the surest means for his immediate safety, my Lord Cedric would pay and not feel its loss.

"And," went on the Duke, "when chance or design brings thee together, if thou wouldst not be made to feel utterly unhappy, mention not the matter to him. He is eccentric like the old lord, and would fall into the spleen, which condition, when entered into by his lordship, becomes of the temperature of that nondescript bourne the other side of Paradise."

Buckingham knew that two emissaries were upon the seas from the New World. They were coming to interest the King in behalf of Sir John. So far the Duke had kept everything from his Majesty and must also keep these "bumpkins" from tormenting him with importunities of so rustic a nature as "western lands."

But the Duke had made provision,—should his designs be curtailed by laches—delegating himself to the post of intercessor, whereby he could

fool both the King and the emissary. Serious injury would be done to no one, unless Cedric might feel poor for a short time. But what were the odds; the Duke of Ellswold would soon die and Cedric's wealth would be unlimited. He would, with a handsome young wife, forget his finances ever were in depletion.

Buckingham had already disposed of some of Sir John's jewels and rare laces, brought over by La Fosse and stored in the chest at the monastery. There was, however, in the great Duke a vein of compunction, and for its easement he had refrained from selling some rare and costly miniatures belonging to Sir John's wife, evidently handed down through a long line of consanguinity. These he resolved in some way to return; perhaps he should find it convenient to present them to Mistress Penwick.

And so the thick, fierce clouds rolled up and gathered themselves together, hanging low, over the head of handsome, careless, rich, young Lord Cedric.

The village of Crandlemar was indignant that he had allowed to exist for so long a time the privilege of the monastery. And these exceptions, with a hint of some foul murder committed at the castle, reached the nobles roundabout and stirred up a general demur. Beside, it was whispered in the shire-moot that the woman about to be espoused by him was a rank Papist

and had already placed popish pictures about the Chapel that was contiguous to the castle. This was all that possibly could be said against her, as she was known to be most gracious to the poor Protestants in and about Crandlemar; giving equally to both factions with a lavish hand. But these matters were all brought up to militate against his lordship.

Lord Cedric was already feeling the first thrusts of his enemy, Misfortune; for 'twas very evident that his Grace of Ellswold was near his death. Warming-pans were of no avail. He grew very cold; his extremities were as ice; while the attendants of his bed-chamber were as red as cooked lobsters from the natural heat of the midsummer's day and the steaming flannels that were brought in at short intervals.

Her Grace walked back and forth outside his door continually, Lord Cedric joining her at times.

The Castle seemed inured to quiet by his Grace's long illness; but now there fell a subtle silence that presaged the coming of an unwholesome visitant. In a room apart lay Adrian Cantemir, weak and sick, but cursing every breath he drew; excited at times to actual madness, and saying,— Why had he come a minute too late? Why had he not followed his own inclinations and broken away from the gambling table at the inn an hour earlier? such thoughts making him absolutely furious.

He had arrived some time after dark at Crandlemar village, and, putting up at the hostelry, he resolved to pay his visit to the castle early on the morrow. He was now beginning to feel that he was destined to gain his point, or why had he so far thwarted Lord Cedric, and why had he escaped the anger of the monks by a well worded and quickly manufactured tale, and even gained their help by it, when they found him bound in the passage, left so by Buckingham. So he had felt somewhat at ease, but love and ambition were strong and stirred him to leave wine and cards and ride out into the open; and, unwitting it may be, to the castle gates. He travelled without groom; so fastening his horse, he entered the avenue a-foot, soon reaching the dark pile of stone which appeared in absolute darkness. Aimlessly he left the avenue and sauntered across the terraces. He had heard a peculiar low murmuring of voices and drew near only to hear Katherine made the wife of another man; hardly understanding until the Chaplain gave the blessing. He knew what Katherine did not; that she was the wife of Lord Cedric and not Sir Julian. He flung himself with all his fury upon the bridegroom to no avail, as has been seen.

These inflammable thoughts, as Cantemir rehearsed them over and over, set his brain afire and before night he was in a fever. The kind and gentle Lady Bettie Payne, who had arrived

late in the afternoon, had gathered nosegays and made bright his chamber, for she truly had compassion upon him. He called her Katherine, as she gave him cooling draughts with her own hand.

Lord Cedric was somewhat surprised the next evening to that of his wedding to see the Duke of Buckingham standing in the great hall of the castle. And when the Duke's business was thrust upon him, there came also dark forebodings; a separation of indefinite length from his young wife, should he be taken to the Tower. Great was his surprise at the Duke's first words, for they were that Katherine's father was alive and well and in London. He gave quickly the whole story of Sir John's escape, also the attempt to recapture him. Then came what his Lordship expected;—a request for a fortune. Of course, while Cedric thought the amounts asked would not be wholly a loss, yet he knew the amounts allowed of a great margin of perquisites, and to whom these perquisites would go, he could guess. However, without question or complaint, he agreed to give what the Duke asked for; indeed the matters were settled there and then.

"If Sir John's life is in danger, I know of no better place of safety than here. He had better come with all haste—'twould be my wife's desire!"

"Wife, so soon?" And the great Duke raised

his eyebrows—a small action, but with him it had a world of meaning in it. "I congratulate thee, my lord, but—if her ladyship knew the danger that would beset her father upon such a journey, I feel sure she would wait patiently a time that must of necessity be of some length. I beg my lord not to think of bringing Sir John hither. As I hinted before, if this matter is brought out and he is proven guiltless of those little matters hinted of, then he could meet her without this heaviness that so weights him. I am sure if such a thought as meeting his daughter were mentioned, he would heartily beg for its postponement and—especially now that she is my Lady of Crandlemar." It stood Buckingham much in hand to keep Sir John and Lord Cedric from meeting, for he had, not only told truth, but had heartlessly impugned the former's character to line his own pocket with the latter's wealth. The truth of the matter was that he was tight caught in a network of financial and political intrigue, and this was the only means to disentangle himself.

After this first business was settled, a second affair was introduced and the Duke spoke of his lordship's matters at Court. He said:

"The King is hard pressed by the nobles—or a portion of them. They insisted that thou wert aiding the Catholics in such a manner that the lives of Protestants in this vicinity were in

danger. They even whisper that a plot is being formulated to murder Monmouth. The King felt it incumbent to send for thee, and as the courier was about to start forth, he received word that the messenger he had sent in pursuit of my Lady of Candlemar had been foully dealt with by no other hand than thine. This stirred the King into a frenzy and straightway he charged thee with treason and—one comes now to take thee to the Tower or wherever it pleases his Majesty to put thee. Indeed, he may have so far forgiven thee by the time thou dost see London, he will offer thee half his bed or—any unusual favour. So take heart. The King loves thee." The illness of Ellswold precluded the Duke from paying any visits within the castle, and he hastened back to London.

Lord Cedric felt if he could only tell Katherine that her father was well and in London, it might bring a reconciliation, and his eyes wandered to the hour-glass, and as he noted the golden sands, he thought there was yet time for a lover's quarrel and then a sweet making-up, which should have no limit of time; but, alas! such blissful moments would doubtless be cut short by the arrival of the King's messenger. All of a sudden a wicked thought came, as he remembered how but a few moments before she had turned coldly from him as he met her in the gallery, and he resolved 'twould be a good time

to make her feel a little of how he had suffered. Separation from her was all he feared now, and she could not help that. She was fast tied to him, and he was satisfied; and now why not torment some of those Satanic whims out of her. "Aye, 'tis the thing to do!" Even as he thought of her, she had gone with Janet and Lady Bettie to Cantemir's chamber, for the latter in a lucid moment begged Lady Bettie to bring her to him. He gave her the letter he bore from her father, requesting her to come to him at once. She was quite beside herself with joy; yet, such is human nature, she on a sudden was in no hurry to leave Lord Cedric. Then she thought he might go with her—but she never would ask him. So after much thinking and feverish deliberation, she sent the letter to him by Janet. Cedric compared the handwriting with the letter he still carried of Sir John's. There was no doubt that the chirography was the same. He was again thwarted by the Russian. He was to gain his wife's ear by this very news. But there were other ways, and he said,—

"I have but a few moments to spend with her ladyship; go to her and tell her so; say that a courier is now upon the highway and—will soon arrive to conduct me to Tyburn-tree by order of the King ——"

"Good heavens, surely your Lordship is not serious!"

"I have been forewarned, Janet. Go, tell her the news. Do not mince the sorry tale. Let her have the weight of it—if weight it be for her pent affection. Indeed, make it strong, blandish it with no 'ifs' or 'mayhaps' or 'possible chances of a change of mind with the King.' Thou must make up quickly a whole catalogue of the horrors enacted at Tyburn. Go, go, hasten thyself, good nurse. I will wait for her here."

Hardly had Janet disappeared when the door again was thrown open and the footman announced a gentleman upon the King's errand. 'Twas indeed his Majesty's guardsman with his order, and Cedric listened with flushed face and beating heart, not to what he said, but for the sound of a silken rustle upon the great hall parquetry; and as he heard it, he raised his voice and said sternly to the courier,—

"And this means Tyburn-tree—a farewell forever to my friends—" There was at these last words a suspicious trembling in his tones that was not wholly natural,—"an *adieu* to all this world that begun for me only—yesterday at the singing of the nightingale—" the sentence was left unfinished, for Katherine now fell at his feet and embraced his knees and said with blanched lips,—

"What is this horrible tale, my lord? Say 'tis not so!" Great unbroken sobs made her voice tremble, and there was such extreme

misery in her face and attitude the guardsman was about to utter a protest, for the order had said nothing of Tyburn, and at such unwarranted display of grief at a summons—why he would put a stop to it; but his lordship put up his hand. "Say 'tis not so," she repeated.

"Nay, I cannot say it, for I know not what lies before me." Katherine was unable to control her grief, and as it broke out, the guardsman discreetly walked to the farther end of the room. Cedric had raised her from the floor and half-supported her as she poured out her grief in words of pleading and entreaty; but Cedric was as adamant, he would not bend to offer any hope. This unbending quality she could not understand, and took it as an omen of ill. In very truth she felt she was to lose for all time her heart's idol. And when Cedric spoke to the guard and told him he was ready to go, she cried "Nay, nay, nay!" in such awful agony he came near relenting. She turned white and would have fallen, had not Cedric supported her. Janet had already entered the room and now came running to her mistress, whom she took in her arms. Cedric turned to the guardsman, saying,—

"My wife is ill. If thou wilt return to London, I will follow within a day or so!"

"In the name of the King I beg my Lord of Crandlemar ——"

Janet broke in at this and said with a ringing voice,—

"Thy order is for the Lord of Crandlemar?"

"It is, madam."

"Then I will tell thee, sir, Lord Cedric of Crandlemar is not here. This is the Duke of Ellswold." She turned to his lordship as she spoke and saw his face grow white. He loved his uncle tenderly. There was a moment of palpable silence; the guardsman bowed to the floor, and the long plumes of his hat swept it in homage, as he raised his hand to his breast. Katherine had swooned and did not hear Janet's assertion, nor did she hear the King's other order for the Duke of Ellswold. The King was aroused and would allow of no mischance. Cedric must go before his Majesty at once.

After a few moments in the death chamber, Cedric started for London. Before they had reached the confines of the city, however, the news of the old Duke's demise had reached the King, who was in high humour, and the result was, a courier had been sent to tell Cedric to return to his castle until after the funeral. So Cedric, accompanied by the King's guard, rode on to the Seat of the Dukes of Ellswold, where in the old Abbey there was much pomp in the putting away of the late Duke.

It was a great disappointment to Cedric not to see Katherine, and he was grieved to learn she

had not, after so many days, entirely recovered from her swoon. He was consoled, however, by his aunt's assertion that her illness was not serious. He turned from Ellswold and hastened back London way, impatient to know why he was sent for, and to have matters settled satisfactorily for all time, that he might with an unburdened heart go to Crandlemar and claim his Duchess; who, he now knew, would be the sweet and loving wife she should. He was truly sad at the loss of his uncle, and for this cause alone he rode into London with downcast appearance. He feared not the evils of the Tower or Tyburn-tree or the menace of either Catholic or Protestant party; neither the importunities of Buckingham; had he not now a great fortune?—ah! but death had brought it him,—and the bitter was mixed with the sweet. There were other matters to menace his peace of mind that had not come until that very moment. What if the Crown should confiscate his property; what was he to do with his wife? There was his aunt, Sir Julian and Lady Bettie Payne, they would care for her. Then his thoughts wandered to Constance, and for a while he half believed he had forgiven her. Then he wondered if she had aught to do with his present condition.

The King in the meantime was not to be duped by Lady Constance. She prided herself

upon being discreet, but she was not enough so for the King's sharp eyes.

"Odd's fish," said he, "the boy is a woman!" And though he had a saturnine and harsh countenance, his disposition was both merry and lenient. He teased her unmercifully, threatening to promote so fine a lad to a gentleman of his bed-chamber. He bade a woman bring some clothing suitable for a female and gave the lady into the hands of female attendants.

The easy manner of the time gave the courtiers license to taunt her. This made her very uncomfortable. The queen's ladies' eyes were upon her. The King's mistresses, not recognizing her as a rival, poked fun at her from behind their fans. But Lady Constance would bear a great deal for the sake of gaining her point. She had posted herself upon the King's affairs with the Duke of Ellswold, and was in a state of great expectation when she heard that the latter was to be brought to the Tower immediately after his uncle's funeral. His entire demesne was out of his hands, he was sadly impoverished; this she bought from Buckingham's menials. It greatly delighted her, for she had more wealth than she knew what to do with, and Cedric, seeing her so pampered by his Majesty, would surely begin to see what a great lady she was, and perhaps would offer her some attention. She did not know that Katherine was already the Duchess of Ellswold. She

heard from Monmouth that Mistress Penwick was to be brought to the palace at the same time Cedric was brought to London, and that 'twas not altogether sure whether his Grace of Ellswold would be taken to the Tower or be made a Royal guest, as the King was first cursing, then praising the new Duke. So Constance began to picture Cedric standing before her, his face flushed as she remembered it to be, his eyelids that he knew so well how to lower, then raise ever so slightly, sending forth from beneath an amorous glance that made her tremble with a sweet thrill of pleasure. Thus she lived from hour to hour, waiting for his Grace, little guessing the awful disappointment that awaited her. She fairly counted the moments.

To her great joy she saw him again. He was brought to the palace, instead of to the Tower. When the King saw the Duke, he forgot, or appeared to forget, that the Duke was a prisoner, and openly embraced him and had him placed near his own apartments. His Majesty was in high good humour, hearing from the Duke's own lips that he had nothing to do with the hiding away of his messenger, and explaining sundry other matters to his satisfaction. "The Duchess," for so the Duke spoke of Katherine for the first time before his Majesty, was unable to arise from her couch, and therefore could not as yet be brought to the palace. The King said he was

pleased that so noble a Duke had gained his point, even though he had outwitted his King.

"Odd's fish, and to be separated so soon! it must not be!"

Lady Constance was joyous when she saw Cedric arrive without Katherine, but at once it made her very curious to know why the "wench was left behind; for was it not the King's order?" She sent a maid to inquire among the servants of the Duke. When the maid returned and told her that Katherine was the Duke's wife, she fainted away. But after a few hours of awful depression and heart-sickness she again nerved herself to battle harder, if possible, than heretofore.

The Duke's trial was begun, and nothing it seemed could be absolutely proven against him. It appeared the King shut his eyes and ears to anything that would incline against his Grace. Not so Constance, who worked secretly. She was determined, if possible, to see him go to the Tower, as the only immediate means of separating him from his wife, who was expected any week at the Royal abode. She informed some of the nobles that were against him that their principal witness, Adrian Cantemir, lay ill from a sword thrust at Crandlemar Castle. To be sure, they had almost forgotten the young man, who had been such a leader in the beginning. This held the case in suspension and the Duke

still a prisoner; but the King gave him no time for thought; they rode, walked, drank, theatred and supped together. If 'twere not for the Duke's love for his wife, and his mourning for his uncle, which cast so deep a shadow over his natural gaiety, 'twas possible he might have been drawn by his Majesty into intrigues of a feminine character.

Constance was ever throwing herself in his path, but he deigned not a glance her way. She appeared content to watch him, whether he paid her any attention or not. She was careful to learn of his fortunes, as the King to appease the Protestant nobles had confiscated the Ellswold estates and everything else that Buckingham had not taken. But this sort of thing was a matter of form with his Majesty. His mind was fully made up. He was not to be frighted or cajoled. He even went so far as to assure the Duke that as soon as his character was proven, giving the nobles no chance to gainsay, he should at once take possession of his estate. The Duke, however, had only his jewels to borrow on, and that was insufferable to his pride. He had a large retinue to support, servants that were aged; these he must look after. Thus matters stood for weeks and months.

Cantemir was at last able to be moved, and was brought to London, where he again tried to communicate with Sir John Penwick, but Buck-

ingham intercepted all letters. There also came word from the new Lord of Crandlemar, that he was about to take up his abode in England. This made Ellswold uneasy and impatient; for he had not money sufficient to place his Duchess in his town house, had he been at liberty to do so, for the great place had not been kept in repair and it must be renovated according to her own ideas. If his trial could only be at once and he could go for her and take her to Ellswold! The King saw his unusual depression and gained from him a confession of his troubles, and without letting the Duke know, sent for the Duchess, who he said should remain at the palace until the Duke should be free to go. When his Majesty told the Duke—for he could not keep the secret—the latter was grateful and felt it was the only alternative, and was much comforted that soon he should see and be with his Duchess, who, he had learned had regained her colour and was in good spirit.

"The King, not caring for the pomp and state his predecessors had assumed, was fond of exiling the formality practiced by a sovereign and taking on the easy manners of a companion. He had lived, when in exile, upon a footing of equality with his banished nobles, and had partaken freely and promiscuously in the pleasures and frolics by which they had endeavoured to sweeten adversity. He was led in this way to

let distinction and ceremony fall to the ground as useless and foppish, and could not even on premeditation, it is said, act for a moment the part of a King either at parliament or council, either in words or gesture. When he attended the House of Lords, he would descend from the throne and stand by the fire, drawing a crowd about him that broke up all regularity and order of the place." In this free and unrestrained way he had put his arm through the Duke's and said confidently,—

"The House of Ellswold shall be honoured in an unusual way; that at least should be a great comfort to thee; but I promise, no matter how the Council act in these matters of thine, thou shalt soon enjoy the comfort of thy new estate at Ellswold."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE COCOANUTS OF THE KING'S CELLAR

MATTERS at Crandlemar were comparatively quiet. There was nothing unusual, unless indeed it was the assiduousness of the young Duchess, who from morning until night ceased not to offer hecatombs for the safety and freedom of her lord. She prayed, fasted and sacrificed for her every desire. She gave alms, offering condolence and sympathy. In her petitions she threw aside all contumely, calling the poorest, sister. She allowed not her thoughts to go astray, striving continually for a pure and meek heart, begging forgiveness for her untowardness toward her husband. Perhaps one of the most remarkable of her acts was the one performed at twilight—discovered by Janet, the wise.

The nurse went to seek her one evening, and found the young woman in a dense cloud of blue that emanated from a costly thurible, which she was swinging before the crucifix in the Chapel. Ascending with the sweet incense was a psalm of contrition uttered from a truly penitent heart. A tall candle burned, lighting up the white-robed figure, and the filmy incense that enveloped it to

a saintly vision. Though Janet watched her mistress thus environed with sacredness, yet the deep impression was somewhat charged with a sense of humour; "for," she opined to herself, "people are so much more ridiculous in mending a breach than they are in making it!" But Janet was not a Catholic, and beside, she made few mistakes and could condone an offence only when made by one she loved. Knowing Katherine as she did, she admired the outward show more than the spirit, and thought of the two the former was more stable. Katherine often prayed aloud, and Janet hearing her, caught the burden of her prayer, and there was actual pain in her voice when she cried out that Cedric might be forgiven for the murder of Christopher. Now Janet knew that the lad had only been slightly injured by Hiary and had fully recovered, and she determined to send for him, and at the Vesper service introduce him into the Chapel and thereby cause to cease her mistress' plaints. And so it came about in the late autumn, when Crandlemar was about to receive its new master from Wales, and the plate and all belongings of the Duke had been sent to Ellswold, and Katherine herself was to set forth for London within a few days, she entered the Chapel for her customary devotions. As she prayed, she was aroused by the opening of the outer door. She looked up and saw Christopher before her. Janet was sur-

prised at her calmness and was amazed when Katherine said to him that she had been expecting to see him all day, as she had heard the evening before that he was alive and had been seen near the castle grounds. Now it was impossible to make Katherine think it was a direct answer to prayer, though Janet did her best. But as it proved, a great weight had fallen from the Duchess' heart, for she became perfectly joyous and positively neglected her devotions in the Chapel. She was delighted to set forth, for the moment had actually arrived, and within a few days she would see Cedric, and, she hoped, her father also; but the latter's abode was unknown to her, save only that 'twas in London.

The night of her arrival at the Royal Palace had closed down dark and stormy. The King and Queen, with the ladies and gentlemen of the Court, had repaired to the Duke of York's theatre to see played the "Black Prince," written by the Earl of Orrery. The King had insisted upon the Duke of Ellswold accompanying them, but the latter declared the play would be a torture, when he should be thinking that perhaps his wife might arrive in his absence. Other thoughts also assailed him, of which he hinted not to the King; but he was confident Constance meant mischief, and he was unwilling to give her any chance to put the weight of her anger on the Duchess.

The great cream-hued chariot bearing Kather-

ine rolled past the Mall and up to the palace. The sleet was falling rapidly and the wind blowing such a gale the sound of the coach was not heard by the Duke, as he paced his chamber. She was trembling and eager, and heard not the admonitions of Janet and Angel to mind the ice-clad step that was let down. She was expectant and eager to see her spouse; but she stood within her apartment and Janet was loosening her capes when the Duke came bounding to her side. He took her in his arms and gazed and gazed, and they minded not the presence of the two nurses, who on a sudden became busy unpacking her Grace's chests. He kissed her until her face was rose-red, and she was drunken with love.

When Lady Constance heard that Katherine had arrived, she became very impatient to catch one glimpse of her. She had heard many things about the young wife, and she had her suspicions and upon them she formed a plan to throw a taunt upon her Grace, bringing both Monmouth and Cantemir into the case. She resolved to make Katherine as unhappy as possible. She scrupled at nothing. Now the fair Constance prided herself upon being a prisoner of the King; but she was not so certain of his favour that she dare make one single open move against Katherine. She must taunt her in secret; but how to do this was puzzling, for she kept her apartment, partly from fatigue after her long ride, and it

may be from a disinclination to go abroad. So she bided her time and ungraciously as she saw the popularity of the noble woman grow and grow; she was fast becoming a great favourite. Indeed, she was constantly visited by the King and Queen, and the greatest ladies of the Court. The Queen had grown very fond of her, spending hours in her company and oftentimes taking her for a walk or ride. Before the Duchess had been within the Palace a month, she was imitated in every way. Great ladies became so familiar, they would take up her articles of the toilet and copy the manufacturer's name. They in a short time were using the same concoction of rouge and perfumes. Their maids must learn what Janet did for her mistress in the way of baths, for "never was there such healthful and dainty complexion." And when the Duke began buying cocoanuts by the wagon load at an enormous expense, and 'twas known that her Grace drank the milk of it by the quart, the King's cellar became too small to hold the quantities that were brought to the ladies of the Court. And 'twas said many of the young fops also used the milk for their complexion. Constance had not yet ordered any of this fruit, but she ascertained where the Duke's were kept and how it might be possible to obtain a few of them for an object that was at least original. Before, however, she resorted to the arts of chemistry, there was an opportunity to

give the Duchess a thrust. Two great chests were being unbound in the corridor just outside of her Grace's door. Constance knew they contained an elaborate and costly *layette;* so she hurried to her own apartment and wrote in a disguised hand a billet that threw out the worst of insinuations, and as a finale she added a *pasquinade* copied hastily from some low and bitter lampoon. She returned through the corridor, and, unnoticed, thrust the paper into a crevice of one of the chests. But Katherine never saw the billet, she was not disturbed in the least, and her ladyship soon saw some one else had gotten hold of it, for there was not a shadow on her Grace's face. This goaded Constance to a perfect fury, and she resolved upon extreme measures.

One very dark and stormy day she left the palace dressed as a servant, and drove in a public conveyance to an old chemist's, who resided in a remote portion of the city. Here she procured materials that if properly handled and successively served would bring the youthful Duchess to her death. She resolved in this case to work slowly and cautiously, allowing of no mischance. It so happened the chemist did not have the articles she required, but promised for a liberal sum to procure them from a certain celebrated physician. This of course would take some time. But the physician was in France and would not return for at least a fortnight. So a fortnight

went by and another and another, until Constance' patience was exhausted, and as she went to the shop for the last time, vowing to wait no longer, if the chemist had not the things, lo! they were there; and after learning how simple it was to use them, she hastened to the palace, there to be met by the news that the Duchess had brought forth a son of rousing weight and strength. Constance fell into a fever, and was obliged to keep her bed for some weeks; then she arose and after being seen again among the ladies of the Court and appearing as unconcerned as possible, when speaking of the Ellswold heir, she found her way below stair and made siege upon the King's cellar and looted a good dozen cocoanuts.

She had procured from the chemist a protrusile instrument for letting fluid through the hard outer covering, and in this manner intended to inoculate the milk of the nut with a slow poison. These, of course, after such treatment, would be returned to their fellows, and the death of Katherine with that of the young lord would be assured.

After a few trials she succeeded in obtaining a result that was entirely satisfactory, if the hole thus made could be effectually plugged. She filled the aperture with a viscous matter that would in a few moments harden if placed in the sun, and to this end she opened the window and

laid the cocoanut in the sun's rays upon the sill.

She was quite alone, yet she feared; indeed, so deadly was her intent, she jumped at every noise, and upon hearing some sound without, slipped on tip-toe from the window to the door and listened, then cautiously drew the bolt and looked without. The corridor seemed even more quiet than usual. Her fears were subdued and as she turned about to close the door, a suction of air caught the curtain and swelled it through the open window, thereupon sweeping the cocoanut to the ground, where it fell at the very feet of his Majesty. When Constance saw what the vile wantonness of the wind had done, she fell upon her knees in wild despair and tremblingly remained thus for an instant only, for a bit of hope sprang up. She arose and quickly ran to the window,—she hesitated, then, ever so slowly she peeped over the sill, and there stood the King with the nut in his hand. "Ah!" she said, drawing back quickly, for they were not looking up, and she felt relief that they did not see her, but unfortunately for her, a lackey was standing some little distance from his Majesty and saw everything.

Of course treason was suspected. It was thought the nut had been dropped to crush the King's head; but upon examination 'twas found there oozed from a small opening curdled milk.

The Royal chemist was summoned, and in a moment all knew that the fruit was poisoned. The lackey had already told the King from what window it fell. Constance was cold with fright. She forgot her love, ambition, revenge, her whole paraphernalia of desires, in this disaster.

Out she went into the corridor to ascertain, if possible, what was a-foot below stairs. "Would they be able," she thought, "to find from whence the nut came?" At the very idea she fled back to her chamber and gazed about in agony, for there lay every condemning thing in the floor, and where was she to hide them, for a search would certainly be made in a few moments. A hiding-place must first be found for the nuts. She looked at the bed; surely that would be searched. She thought to sew them in the sleeves of her gowns, but that would look bulky and there was not time. She flew about in wild anxiety. She listened at the door to the sounds below, and, seeing a lackey, asked what the noise meant. He said a cocoanut had been dropped and they were going to search for the one who did it. Again her ladyship fled to her chamber and began to look behind chairs and screens and portable cabinets; but to no avail; she found no safe hiding. At last, the great, high, nodding tester caught the glance of her anxious eye. She hastily placed first a small table—the only one

she was able to carry—then a chair upon the bed, and with the one upon the other was able to see the top of the tester. But alas! it was cone-shape. Invention, however, was not out of Constance' line, and quickly she placed a box upon the pinnacle and in it five cocoanuts. There were yet at least a half-dozen more to hide, beside the poison and instrument. She thought to place these in one of her great hats and raise them to the tester also. As she was about to mount the improvised lift, she heard approaching footsteps. Hardly had she withdrawn the table and chair and placed the hat—well bent—beneath the low stool whereon she had been sitting, and arranged the folds of her heavy brocade like a valance about her, when the door was thrown open.

"My God!" said she, under her breath; "'tis the King himself!"

His Majesty accompanied by a number of gentlemen in waiting, entered the room. He appeared in high, good humour, and inclined to be facetious. He advanced straight to her. She, hardly rising from the stool, made a deep curtesy. It was well done, without disarranging the full folds of her stiff brocade, that inclined to stand whether she so honoured the King or not. He laid his hand familiarly upon her shoulder, bearing somewhat upon it, until she turned quite red, either from his intent or her own guilt.

"We are looking for secrets. Hast thou any, my little beauty?"

"Your Majesty doth honour me greatly; first by thy presence and secondly by thy thought that I might have a secret—as if woman could keep even the shade of one from her King!"

"But sometimes there is more happiness in the shade than in the substance." His keen eyes did not leave her face. But hers were turned with an apprehensive stare upon the King's gentlemen, who were looking and prying impudently here and there about the rooms and closets. Her gowns were even pressed here and there among their paddings. Tables and cabinets were opened; the bed was examined. They lifted the heavy valance and one got upon his knees and prodded beneath with his sword. As he withdrew with a very red face, some one shook the curtains with such vigour the tester miscarried and down rolled, one by one, the cocoanuts. The King fairly yelled with laughter, holding on to his sides, his gentlemen joining him with mirth restrained somewhat by the seriousness of the case.

"Indeed, the young Duchess hath turned all heads by her gorgeous beauty, and all would be like her, whether or no!" said the King between great bursts of laughter. Lady Constance' mind was ready and caught quickly at his words, and she turned to him with a gay laugh that

somewhat veiled her terrible fear and nervousness.

"Indeed, 'tis the fashion to use the cocoanut milk for drinking and ointment, and the silly wenches of maids doth steal it dreadfully and I was compelled to hide them."

"But 'twill do thee no good, 'tis not thy nature to be round. Hast thou seen the young heir? He is a lusty fellow; and 'tis well worth a journey to the nursery to see him," and he took her hand and raised her to her feet. "Come, we will go and call upon his lordship."

There was an agonized expression on Constance' face as she was compelled to move at the King's bidding. Slowly she moved. It seemed every motion was full of painful effort. All eyes, for some unaccountable reason, appeared to turn to the train of her dress that rustled subtlely; even Constance turned to look back and down with bulging eyes on that silken train, and though she moved ever so cautiously the bristling folds caught upon the edge of the stool and turned it over, the cocoanuts, poison bottle and all falling a-sprawl. The King bent down and picked up the vial, then dropped it quickly, saying,—

"Odd's fish, the female that did don man's attire and flirt about with foppish airs is trying to play the hen and has made a nest and gone to setting on spoiled eggs that will hatch nothing

but shades, and wraiths, and mandrakes!" And he lifted a cocoanut, from which the milk was oozing out slowly and in a curdled state.

"And who, mistress of the chemist's shop, hath taught thee his art?"

"'Tis a great and awful thing that hath happened; indeed, oh! King, I knew not the things were under the stool——"

"Then 'twas unfortunate thou shouldst remain seated before thy King; in this case 'twas condemning." And he turned and cried,—

"Hi! hi! call the guard! Thou shalt go into durance until I have sifted this dairy business." Before the unfortunate woman could open her mouth to plead further, the King was gone and two stalwart guards stood at either side of her, ready to conduct her behind bolts and bars.

Now the King was inclined to be easy with all his subjects, but when treason lay so open before him, he was quick to punish. Constance, being a cousin of the Duke of Ellswold, he put the case before him. On the instant, the Duke gave a solution to Constance' aims, explaining everything to the King. He also—for he dreaded what the King might do—said 'twas possible she was not of sound mind. His Majesty saw the Duke's drift and declared that death should not come upon her, but she should be imprisoned. This satisfied the Duke, for he was seriously afraid for the young heir and his wife.

Now Constance was utterly without hope. She was degraded at Court, nevermore to rise again, and of course this state of things would be known at every street corner. Even though she could make her escape, where could she go? Who would accept her as the noble Lady Constance again? She would wander up and down the world, friendless; while Katherine would have love, wealth and honour, all one could wish for, all there was in life to have.

"Nay, nay, nay!" she cried in her agony. "I shall have one more chance." She threw out her arms to the air and ground her teeth and dragged herself from end to end of her bare and lonely cell. "One more chance," she cried, "and 'twill be death to her; aye, death!"

CHAPTER XXIV

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE TOWER

Sir Julian had been striving for months to make peace with the young Duchess; but all effort appeared futile, until Providence suddenly stepped in and aided him. Cantemir had turned religious, owing to the taking hold upon him of a mortal disease; and though he had not been about to undo any of his schemes in Cedric's case, yet he intended to do so as soon as he was able. He was not idle, however, as he wrote many letters and received visits from the ones who were foremost in the fight. Nor was he long in discovering that their feelings were already changed toward Ellswold, for they saw 'twas unpopular to be striving against the King's desires, and against a nobleman who would be very powerful when he should regain his fortunes. The Count wrote to Pomphrey, saying he wished to speak face to face with him.

At this interview the Russian unburdened his heart of all malice and hatred, and gave vent to ill-gotten secrets, of which Buckingham's schemes were foremost. So open and frank was the Count in his assertions there was no doubt in Sir

Julian's mind but what he had created an wholesome feeling with his conscience; and for himself, recognized the interview as nothing more nor less than the comely intervention of Providence.

Sir Julian determined upon an immediate *rendezvous* with Sir John Penwick, to the end that a concerted movement might effectually bring the Duke to his senses. He loved Buckingham, but he loved the Duchess of Ellswold more, and for this cause of peace, intended to hedge the Duke about with an impenetrable wall.

Buckingham soon saw that the strings were closing about him, and that 'twas Sir Julian who held the taut ends. But the great Duke had still one more move, a move so venturesome, so involved with hazard, that when 'twas made, the King himself admired and paid homage to its projector.

The Duke knew that Sir Julian, with a whisper in the King's ear, could send him to the Tower. So at the point of Sir Julian's sword—metaphorically—he was forced to go to the King and straighten matters as best he could. This the great Duke did, with the most exquisite urbanity. He knew well the King's humour, and the most propitious moment in it, and propinquity played him fair, and there vibrated in his Majesty's ear the dulcet tones of George Villier's magnetic voice, saying,—

"Oh, King! may I tell thee of what foul issue

fulsome Nature hath brought forth, and what travail I suffer for ——"

"Odd's fish! what hast thou been doing, George, what hast thou ——"

"Oh, King!" and the Duke bowed upon his knee and touched with his lips the great ring upon his Majesty's hand; "I did engender with a brain unwebbed by wine, a body ample of strength and health, my soul absolved, my heart palpitant with pure love and rich intention; but corruptible Nature hath adulterated and brought forth an oaf, to which I lay no claim ——"

"Egad! Duke; we'll wager a kilderkin of chaney oranges at four pence each and a dozen cordial juleps with pearls that thy conscience is about to bewray thee."

"Your Royal Highness doth honour me by the assumption that such a kingly component is mine. I cannot gainsay thy assertion, but who but my King could touch to life the almost undefined limning of moral faculty that has been my poor possession heretofore ——"

"And who but thy King would give to thy swart issue a, no doubt, condign interest; come, curtail loquacity!"

"Then, your Majesty, to be brief, I have raised for thee the subsidies thou were too modest to ask the House for ——"

"Odd's fish, and this is thine oaf; oaf, callest thou it, when it has brought unspeakable joy to

thy King? Not so, 'tis an issue that outshines in weight, point of beauty and actual worth that bouncing youngster of Ellswold's."

"But, oh! King, I counted not upon the exigencies of thy love. I thought only of the pleasure 'twould give thee to have subsidies without plea, and I have made two of thy favourites my victims. How should I know that the Duke and Duchess of Ellswold were to become nestlings in thy cradle of love?" The King's face darkened, but for a moment only, as the sunshine of full coffers had penetrated the vista of his needs, and a cloud even though it bore the after-rain was not to darken his expectations. "I beg thine indulgence to allow me to presume upon fancy. Supposing Sir John Penwick was alive and had committed a crime that made it impossible for him to seek the aid of his beloved King; that the said Sir John has vast possessions in the New World that rightfully belonged to the English crown as hostage for his own life, that had been in the hands of the French; that these matters had been brought to the King's ear, but his Royal Highness had been troubled with weightier affairs at home, and that one of his very lowly but loyal subjects had undertaken, without aid of Government, to secure these possessions for his King, calling to his aid the generosity of Ellswold, who was willing to give all without knowing why, save 'twas for his King and ——"

"And Penwick has proven guiltless and comes to his King to claim his rightful possession;—and the subsidies ——"

"Are still thine, and thou shalt have them within a fortnight, if thou wilt grant me one small request, oh! King."

"Thou hast it. Be brief."

"Of my appointment, a new keeper of the Tower." The King started and half turned from the Duke, while through his mind ran hurriedly the names of "Chasel, Howard, Baumais" and "who hath he in mind." Then like a flash came the thought of Lady Constance, and he turned about quickly and said with severity,—

"Thou hast our word," and with a gesture gave the Duke his *congé*.

That very night just as the early moon began to whiten the Towers of old London, the key turned in the door of Lady Constance' cell; but turned so lazily—either from indolence or an unaccustomed hand—that her ladyship looked up and saw to her surprise a new gaoler. He smiled, thereby giving to the heart of its object a great thrill of joy, for it meant kindliness and kindliness is often predicated of selfishness or a desire for things one has not.

"What is thy name, fool?"

"Just plain Fool," and he gave her due obeisance.

"And why so?"

"Is it not enough to be so christened by so great a lady?"

"Then thou art not a subsidiary but chief factotum?"

"Aye, the other is ill and I have spent the afternoon in learning the—names."

"Thou shouldst be well paid for so short a season.—Is he serious?"

"I hope so, good lady."

"Oh! if thou wouldst make profit of thy time, begin by bringing hither for my supper good ale and wine, with sugar and spices; and I will brew thee such a horn as thou hast ne'er thought on before. And thou for each good turn shalt drink a wassail to thy buxom wench and shalt have money for the basset-table."

It is needless to say that Buckingham knew his man, and Constance' desires for one whom she could bribe. The latter's first and only desire was for means of escape, and to this end tried to bribe the keeper for man's attire. This was not the Duke's aim, and Constance, being thwarted, struck quickly upon another means.

She succeeded in getting the promise of a visit from Cantemir, who was little able to be about, but he intended to see her of his own accord, that he might move her to a lively interest in the salvation of her soul.

In anticipation of his visit, Constance had obtained through the gaoler certain drugs of

nondescript virtues. These she carefully hid and made her final preparations for a speedy flight.

Cantemir stopped for a moment, as he stepped from the chair, and looked up at the prison walls, that were made grey and indistinct by the clouded moon and falling rain. Religion had changed him even more than the ravages of disease. His true self had awakened, and the beauty of it had devoured the Satanic expression that was wont to lie upon his countenance. His face fairly beamed with a light that came from within, where his soul stirred now free from sin's fetters.

He was conducted by the keeper through the windings of the sombre corridors to the cell of Constance, who greeted him with the words:

"Now, Adrian, we can excuse wantonness in the devil, but never slothfulness in religion. We have no shrines here as abroad; what has kept thee from thy captive cousin?"

"I am not late, Constance; thou art impatient, and as for shrines, I carry one in my heart all the time, and thou must have one, too ——"

"Damn! We have no time to prate. I must get out of this vile hole.—Hast thou seen the devil Duchess lately?"

"Aye, yesterday I saw her riding out. She is very beautiful, but she has changed ——"

"Changed—how?"

"She has grown fleshy ——"

"Ah! say not 'fleshy' but fat! fat! Now what good fortune is this? The Duke will be getting a divorce, for he doth abominate a fat woman. Good, good! I must see her. I shall pay her a visit before I leave for France."

"Thou wilt have far to journey, for they leave at once for Ellswold. The case will be settled within a few days at most."

"A few days at most? Legal folderol, a mere shade of a trial. Aye; I must see her Grace. I have a message for her."

"I will serve thee; Constance, I will take thy message—" Adrian was interrupted by the entrance of the gaoler, who brought in cordial juleps. Her ladyship made the fellow drink, before she would allow him to go. Then, as he left them again, she said,—

"Thou canst not; it is a message no one can deliver but me," and as if to seal her words she poured down a good, round bumper.

"What dost mean, Constance? Thou art too subtle for me!"

"Too subtle? Hast thou lost the art of penetration? Then I'll tell thee, thou—the 'Ranter,' as they call thee. Thou who hast become Bunyan's squire. I am going to poison my lady or give her a dagger thrust. She must die."

"Thou art the devil, Constance; but there is

one who can outwit the devil, and he will do it, too."

"What hast thou to say about it?"

"Thou shalt not do it."

"What wilt thou do to prevent it?"

"I will put the house of Ellswold on their guard."

"Thou wilt not help me to escape, and thou wilt run with tales to Ellswold. Thou wouldst keep me here, that I might soon die, so thou couldst have my estates. Poor, puny thing, that art upon death's threshold now. Thou wouldst have me die, so thou couldst live luxuriously and use as much of my wealth as thou couldst, leaving behind a paltry residue for the Crown. Thou wouldst indeed!" said Constance, scornfully, as she fumbled in the folds of her dress for the small bottle hidden there.

"Constance," said Cantemir, under his breath, as he lifted one of the mixtures before him, "thou must not kill. Let me awaken thy better nature——"

"Nay; she must die!"

"I will not remain longer with thee, if thou dost hold such foul intent. Take back thy words. I will give thee no rest until thou dost. There is a God who will sweeten thy ill feeling for Katherine——"

"Shut thy mouth, fool!" and she spoke with such fury Adrian's heart sank within him, and his

head fell upon his arms upon the table. "Thou wilt have a season of prayer, then; so be it. Maybe, if thou prayest with thy whole heart for sixty seconds, mine will change," and as she said the words, she dropped some deadly thing into his glass.

The wine was not moved nor discoloured, and as Cantemir raised his head, took hold upon it, and lifted and drank it nearly half.

"I love thee, cousin, with a Christian spirit, and I cannot see thee lose thy—soul." A shiver passed through his thin frame, and when he again began to speak, he drooled sick'ningly. "I say thou shalt not—kill her—and some one—else says it—I will watch thee in spirit ——"

Constance wished him to die quickly, that she might not be obliged to look upon prolonged horrors. She could easily arrange his position, with his head upon the table, to look quite natural, as if in drunken sleep, and when the keeper came, she would give him a like portion, before he could make any discovery, and when they were both despatched, she would don Cantemir's attire and take the keeper's keys and be gone. She quickly poisoned another glass, then looked at Cantemir. So horrible was the glassy glare in his eye, she made as if to arise from the table, but he leant over and grasped her hand. Constance' face was livid with fear, and beside, she heard the gaoler. As the keys were turned in

the door, Cantemir's head dropped back against the chair, and he sat upright, but dead; his hand fastened tight upon his cousin's. She screamed and fell, half-fainting, across the table. The keeper sprung to her aid, and took hold of the full goblet of wine and pressed it to her lips. She tried to recover herself, seeming to know 'twas not the time to indulge in a fainting fit; but the strain was too much, her body was stronger than her mind, and she mechanically took the goblet and poured the contents down her throat. A thought must have come to her with the rapidity of lightning, for she jerked the goblet from her mouth, spilling the dark fluid over her. She glared at the empty cup with distended eyeballs, and screaming once wildly, fell heavily across the table.

It had turned out differently and better than Buckingham had thought; and after making a hasty trip into France, whence he was immediately recalled by his King—who was luxuriating in the easement of pecuniary difficulties—he journeyed to Ellswold to present to the young Duchess certain rare laces, gems and porcelains he had found—so he intimated—among the Russian Count's possessions.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GARDEN OF YOUTH

THE meeting of Katherine and her father was a joyous one. As Sir John pressed her to his heart, Janet knelt at his feet, kissing the hand he held out to her. And there stood by the Duke of Ellswold and Sir Julian, the latter having received at last the most gracious welcome from the Duchess.

But yet Pomphrey was not happy; his conscience troubled him beyond measure. So he set about to make himself right with the world. He argued that adoration should be given to God only, and when one was so selfish and thoughtless to give it to another being, it was time he looked to his soul. And for the correction of this serious fault, he left Ellswold and went into France, and in a short time became a devout *religieux*.

Lady Bettie Payne was so wrought upon by this great change in Sir Julian's life, for a fortnight she remained within her chamber, trying to feel what 'twould be like to live the life of a nun. But this season of devotion was suddenly

interrupted by a visit from St. Mar, of whom she was very fond. He asked her hand in marriage and was accepted.

In course of time a family of three boys and two girls were born to the Duke and Duchess. A great christening party was in preparation. The Duchess was worried about the christening robe, that had not yet arrived, and she said to Janet,—

"Indeed, Janet, this delay reminds me of my anxiety over the chests that were to bring me my first finery—dost remember, at Crandlemar?"

"Aye. It does not take much of a memory to think back seven years!"

"Seven years! Why, Janet, thou art growing old!"

"Nay, sweet Mistress; but the two generations I now nurse are very young."

"'Tis true.—But what thinkest thou could detain the chest? Father Pomphrey cannot be kept waiting for a christening robe. And to think of Lady Ann being baptized in a common frock! 'Twould make Bettie St. Mar laugh; she already feels quite jealous because we are the first to have Father Pomphrey. And methinks, Janet, now that she is in expectancy—she will so vibrate 'twixt France and England,—fearing she will not be near Father Pomphrey for the christening—that little Julian and François will forget which is home."

"She need not do that; he could go to France."

"Nay, not so; for he leaves at once for Rome and will not return to England ere summer, meaning not to stop at all in France."

"Ah! that makes me think of what I heard him say to Monsieur St. Mar in the nursery. 'Twas something about a christening. Monsieur said: 'Thou art expected at Crandlemar Castle?' and Father Pomphrey answered: 'Aye, sometime before next Michaelmas.'"

"Then Lady Bettie will remain in England mayhap."

"'Tis possible."

"What did he say of the children, Janet?"

"Of my lord Duke's and thine?"

"Aye."

"He said not a word of them in particular, but fondled all alike, calling each by name, and now I think on't, I wonder he could remember a dozen or so, when he has not yet been three days in the castle. 'Twas 'Lady Mary' and 'Sir Jasper' and 'Lady Jane' and 'Lady Kate' and 'Lord Ivor'; and for each he had a story. And Monsieur grew tired, and my lord Duke asked Sir Julian if the children did not tire him also, and he answered: 'Duke, there is a peculiarly wholesome knowledge that we cannot obtain save through a child's mind; and while in the companionship of children, we are surrounded by a field of flowers, whose glory fructifies the good

germ within us, and Wisdom—that tallest flower, that knows no harvest—springs up at prime, blossoms forth at compline and grows a fragrant staff, upon which man leans in the night of life.' Then they walked away, and I heard no more."

"Dear Father Pomphrey—" Then for a moment the Duchess looked with a far-away expression out upon the snow-covered landscape, then, on a sudden, she said, almost pettishly,—"But, Janet, what keeps the chest?"

"Perhaps 'tis Providence."

"What dost mean; how Providence?"

"Thou hast ordered the robe to be so perfect, so in accordance with the Royal mode, the child will be in torment. Indeed, I am afraid 'twill make the little lady ill to be so encased. Ah! but thou art great folk, and, as Dent hath said, such people 'spend their time in tricking and trimming, pricking and pinning, pranking and pouncing, girding and lacing and braving up themselves in most exquisite manner;—these doubled and redoubled ruffles, these strouting fardingales, long locks and fore tufts;—it was never a good world since starching and steeling, buskes and whalebones, supporters and rebatoes, full moons and hobbyhorses came into use.' I doubt not that Father Pomphrey himself will demur at such cruelty."

But the chest came in time, and Katherine was satisfied.

The castle was filled with guests, and the nurseries full of bright young children waiting impatiently to be taken to the great picture-gallery, where, under the limned faces of many generations, the christening was to take place.

An altar had been raised; and upon it was the golden service, a little apart the font, and upon either side of the long gallery were flowers banked 'neath specially honoured portraits.

At the appointed hour the children defiled down the long room, then came the other guests, and finally Sir Julian Pomphrey in his robe of office—Father Pomphrey, so elegant, loving, good; a princely priest. Then came Janet with little Lady Ann in her arms; the child appearing like an Egyptian mummy in white bands. The Duke and Duchess looked handsome and proud. And when the celebration was concluded, all form was dissipated, the children gathering about the youngster for a "peep," then scampered to the flowers. And as the elder folk looked on, some one opined that the human nosegay was more gorgeous of apparel and glow of cheek than the Ayrshire rose or the twisted eglantine. Then suddenly the children gathered about a single portrait of remarkable rich colouring, and little Lady Margaret came running and saying with a lisp,—

"Come, see, Father; 'tis the prettiest picture here, and there are no flowers 'neath it."

"What, no flowers?" and Father Pomphrey looked down in feigned surprise.

"Why, here *is* a flower!" and the child lifted a crushed immortelle from the parquetry and gave it to the priest, who quickly made the sign of the cross and said something almost inaudible about the flower being prophetic; and then he leant close to the child's ear, saying,—

"Will Lady Margaret do something for Father Pomphrey?"

"Aye, anything——"

"Remember always to pray for the soul of Lady Constance Clarmot." Then raising the flower, he said abstractedly,—"What gems of thought we find in the Garden of Youth!"

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